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"A SILVER DOLLAR FOR ANOTHER PIRATE-PILL LIKE THAT!" CRIED CAPTAIN STEWART.

Midshipman Dare,

THE PIRATE-CATCHER;

OR,

THE SEA ROVERS OF '98.

A Tale of the Grand Old Frigate United States.

BY T. J. FLANAGAN,
AUTHOR OF "DETECTIVE HARRY BLOUNT," "THE
PARK MYSTERY," "THE CRUISE OF THE
OCEAN QUEEN," "BURIED TREASURE,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

"STOP, sir! Release me instantly!"
"Come, now. Don't play the prude!"
"Let me go, you coward! You are a disgrace to your uniform!"
"Nonsense, my dear! Why such a fuss over a kiss?"

The first speaker, a pretty girl of about sixteen, made no response, devoting all her energy to escape from the embrace of a young man attired as a naval officer, but finding her struggles unavailing, she cried:

"Help! Help! Help!"

It was on a quiet roadway in the upper part of the city of New York, at a period when every one in the city lived below Canal street (the district now devoted entirely to business)—a rather lonesome spot at any time, but especially so after dark.

Knowing this, the girl was not very hopeful of receiving immediate answer to her cry, but her cries alarmed her less informed assailant, who started back in time to receive a crushing blow from a stick in the hands of a young man who appeared to have sprung out of the very earth.

Without waiting to see the effect of the blow, the new-comer sprung toward the girl, exclaiming:

"Don't be frightened, miss; I will protect you!"

"Look out! He has drawn his sword!" cried the girl, and the youth swung round in time to catch the sword on his stick.

Whether it was the strength or the skill with which it was made, the parry of the stout ash stick knocked the sword from the hands of the officer, and before he could regain it the youth struck him again—this time knocking him senseless.

"Oh, sir, take me home! Here is his sword—so, if he follows us, you'll be safe."

Taking the sword which the girl had picked up, and yielding to her evident terror, the youth allowed himself to be hurried from the scene of the encounter.

"We have over a mile yet to travel—I hope he won't come after us!" said the girl, with a hurried look backward, although it was too dark to see even the face of her companion.

"Do you know him?"

The girl hesitated a moment before replying, and the youth could feel that she blushed while answering:

"No. He met me a little while before you came. I had been out for a walk, and when he asked if I could direct him to Captain King's residence, I said yes—that I was going there. He looked and acted like a gentleman, at first, and I didn't think it necessary to tell him who I was—for I am Emily King, Captain King's sister."

"And I am Ben Darrel, living until yesterday just across on Long Island, but now of nowhere in particular. Is your brother in the navy?"

"Yes—he has just been made a captain, and is home on sick-leave," replied Emily.

For a few minutes they walked on in silence, the youth appearing to be buried in thought, and the girl not caring to disturb him until she stopped at the gate barring the walk leading to a handsome house.

"This is my brother's house," she said, and then noticing that he made no movement toward entering, continued:

"Of course, you will come in and let me, as well as my brother, thank you for your timely and courageous—"

"It was nothing! I was weary and fell asleep under a tree—fortunately near enough to scare the fellow!" interrupted Ben.

"Please open the gate! and now walk in!" she continued, laying a restraining hand on his arm, as he seemed to hesitate.

Entering the parlor, they were met by Captain King, a fine-looking man of about thirty-five, in naval undress uniform, to whom Emily introduced Ben Darrel, and related how they had become acquainted.

Her story finished, Emily forgot all about her anxiety to thank Ben, and learning from her brother that his wife was "up-stairs," hurried away, leaving all the acknowledgments to be made by Captain King.

The latter was not slow about expressing his thanks to Ben, and his indignation at the insult offered Emily. He inquired as to the age and appearance of the man, but Ben could tell him nothing.

"I've got his sword, and he must have been pretty young or I could not have taken it away from him," was his modest reply.

Mrs. King and Emily entered just then, and after uttering a few well-chosen words of thanks and praise, Mrs. King continued:

"And now, no more talk until this naughty damsel and her knight-errant have dined. Come, Mr. Darrel!"

Leaving them in the dining-room, Mrs. King returned to her husband, for what purpose can easily be guessed by the following:

"Harry, something must be done for this young man. He is in trouble—at home I suspect—and Emily is trying to find what it is. I'm afraid, though, that must be left to you. A young man is not apt to confide his troubles to a young woman—especially on such short acquaintance."

"Dear me! what philosophers we are becoming!" laughed Captain King, adding: "Very well. I'll make him stay here to-night—at any rate, invite him, and that will prove your home-trouble theory. Now, you had better see that your hero isn't being talked out of his supper. I'm going into the library; let me know when he's through."

The captain left the parlor, but his reading was soon interrupted by the entrance of his wife and the youthful "hero and heroine."

"Emily and I must go out for a few minutes, so we have decided to leave Mr. Darrel with you," explained Mrs. King, with a significant look at her husband.

"You live on Long Island, I believe, Mr. Darrel," said Captain King, looking at his watch, "and, as it is rather late to cross now, I hope you will stay with us to-night."

The young man grew red and murmured something which the captain did not catch, but that made no difference in the game he was playing, for, as if he had heard, he exclaimed:

"Oh, if you think they will worry at home, of course it is only right you should return. I will send my boat with you."

"I did not say that, sir," replied the young man. "The fact is, I have no home. Until this morning I lived with an uncle—my only relative—just across the river. He is a fisherman by occupation and a brute by nature. This morning when I returned—I was out all night with the schooner—he was beating my aunt and I interfered—"

"Well?"

"Well, I didn't get the worst of it. He undertook to give me a thrashing—but he didn't, and I was told to clear out as soon as he was able to talk."

"You speak of a schooner, Mr. Darrel. Do you know anything about sailing?"

"Oh, yes, sir. In fact, with the help of three negroes and a couple of white boys I ran my uncle's craft. He was too lazy and ignorant to do it himself and preferred to remain home abusing my aunt."

Captain King gazed reflectively at the handsome, intelligent features of the speaker and asked:

"What do you intend doing?"

"I hardly know, sir."

"Excuse me, but you use very different language to that of fishermen generally. Where were you educated?"

"At home, sir, by my aunt. She is well educated and taught me what little I know," replied Darrel, adding:

"And now, if you please, sir, I will go."

"But, I don't please, Mr. Darrel. You have rendered us a great service to-night—we don't know how great, and I shall not rest easy until I have repaid you. By your own showing you have no home—you must excuse my bluntness—and here you must remain until I can find means to carry out an idea which occurred to me. How would you like to go to sea—as a midshipman?"

"Please don't make fun of me!" replied the younger man, seriously.

"Then you would like it. Well, I think we can manage it so that you shall. I think I hear the ladies—let us join them."

And thus it came about that Ben Darrel, a homeless, friendless waif at seven in the evening, spent that night and many following nights at the home of his friend, Captain King, where he was treated with courteous consideration.

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE "UNITED STATES."

"Is Captain Stewart aboard?"

"Yes. What's your business?"

The second speaker was Midshipman Grace of the frigate "United States," and the other a young man of about nineteen or twenty, who had just come aboard in a shore boat.

To the middy's counter-question, the other quietly replied:

"That, sir, is my business!"

"Very good! Then you can't see him!" exclaimed the middy, angrily—not knowing that the captain had just come up and was standing on the quarter-deck, but the other did, and very coolly replied:

"Oh, yes, I can! Out of my way!" and brushing the middy aside he crossed to the captain to whom he presented a letter.

The captain's countenance lighted up on seeing the handwriting, and after a hasty perusal of the letter, he extended his hand, saying:

"All right, my lad! Get your kit aboard quick, for we sail in an hour."

"I have everything alongside, sir!"

"Uniform and all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Grace, see to getting Mr. Darrel's things aboard!"

This was gall and wormwood, but the middy had to attend to the work of seeing Darrel's chest raised and put below, while the latter was being introduced to Mr. Ballard and Mr. Allen—first and second officers of the "United States."

"Now, Mr. Ballard, you can weigh anchor as soon as you like," said Captain Stewart immediately after Darrel's chest was hoisted aboard, and when the young man came on deck, uniformed as a midshipman, the "United States" was already under way for the West Indian waters.

French privateers had for some time been destroying commerce between the West Indies and America, and the mission of the United States was to destroy them.

It was just after the Revolution; peace had been established between the United States and England, and there was now an opportunity to attend to the pirates and free rovers that were destroying what little commerce there was.

"We're going to have a stiff blow before long!" remarked Lieutenant Ballard, shortly after Darrel came on deck, and, addressing the latter, asked:

"Ever been to sea before?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's good! Know anything about sailing a ship?"

"Yes, sir—a little. I've handled a schooner," replied Darrel, but the lieutenant was already giving orders to shorten sail, and paying no attention to him.

Quick and sharp the orders came, and the large crew springing aloft with a will, the United States was quickly in condition to meet the impending storm, with nothing left standing but the balance reef foresail and the close-reefed mainsail. Jib and flying, fore and maintopsails—everything on the lighter spars was taken in.

"She could stand a little more, but we're in no great hurry and she's just refitted—so I won't risk them," said Ballard, regarding the rapid work of the crew with considerable satisfaction.

And she could, for the United States was of a peculiar model—but one other, before or since, ever having been built in the same style.

They were now outside with plenty of seaway, and the frigate-of-war, as the United States was, flew along before the storm like a bird on the wing.

Two bells (5 o'clock) had been sounded when the squall struck, and an hour after it had passed—leaving no trace of its fury on the stanch frigate.

"That's quite a sailor you shipped just before sailing!" remarked Lieutenant Ballard on joining the captain, at supper, the fifth day out, leaving Lieutenant Allen in charge of the deck.

"Whom do you mean—Darrel? Where is he?"

"He is the lad I mean. He's on deck now with Allen—more interested in the working of

the ship than in his supper, although I believe he could handle her himself."

"I've no doubt of it, Ballard," returned the captain, adding with a smile, and a sly look at Grace and Reeves:

"I wish the same could be said of our other young gentlemen."

Reeves, the senior midshipman, joined heartily in the laughter this provoked, but Grace scowled, and in an audible aside, said:

"We can't all be born in the hold of a fishing-smack."

"Even if that were true—and I happen to know it is not—what disgrace is there in it?"

Lieutenant Ballard spoke a little sharply, somewhat embarrassing the midshipman, who muttered an inaudible reply and took advantage of the first opportunity to leave the table.

"So you, too, know young Darrel?" asked Captain Stewart.

"No, sir. I know nothing about him except that he was born in Massachusetts and lived there until his parents died. Then he went to live with his uncle, a fisherman on Long Island. That he told me himself."

"Well, that's something I did not know, but if you care to hear what I do know of Ben Darrel, light a cigar and I'll tell you."

The cigars being lighted, the captain reflected for a few moments, and then taking a thick paper from his pocket, began:

"You, of course, know Harry King. Well, since he's been wounded, married and promoted all in the same month, Harry's beginning to believe that the pen really is mightier than the sword."

"This lad, Darrel, rendered Harry a service which our friend repaid by getting him an appointment as midshipman aboard the United States—his own ship not being selected as yet."

"But to return to the pen and the sword part of it: Instead of sending me a simple billet regarding the youngster, he inflicts all this bunch on me, heading it 'A Concise Statement of the Heroic Rescue of Miss Emily King by Midshipman Ben Darrel,' and, as I'm not much of a story-teller, I think I'll give it as I've got it here."

Captain Stewart paused for a moment, and then continued:

"This is a copy of what was sent to a paper in Boston and another in New York (as much to punish the rascal mentioned in it as anything else), but it explains the way it was written—for Harry did not wish to appear as the author, although he used the papers to procure the appointment."

"Now for the story—the concise statement, as he calls it."

The captain at once began the relation of Ben Darrel's story, but was soon interrupted by the cry of "Man overboard!"

"It's the new man—Darrel!" exclaimed Grace, as the captain and Ballard came hastily on deck, and, a moment later, sprung into the boat lowered to rescue Ben.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOVE—A LEAP FOR LIBERTY.

As the boat, in command of Grace, left the ship's side, the United States wore round and sent up rockets every minute to show her location as she lay to.

"What can be delaying them? If the boy was afloat, they would have picked him up long ago!" exclaimed Captain Stewart, at the expiration of a half-hour.

"They're a-comin', sir! I can hear the oars!" said the boatswain.

The old sailor was correct, but the boat contained no Darrel, and it was with heartfelt regret the captain was compelled to give up the lad as lost.

In the heavy sea still running, there was little chance that Ben would have caught any of the miscellaneous articles thrown after him, or that he would be able to sustain himself until daylight, if he did.

But Ben Darrel was an expert swimmer, and about the time the boat returned to the United States, he was saving himself from being run down by climbing the fore-chains of a vessel three miles dead astern.

Once over the bulwarks, Ben found himself facing a short, slim-built man in the uniform of an officer, who started back on seeing him.

Even before the officer spoke, Ben realized that he was aboard a French privateer!

"Ha! You are the cause of those lights!" exclaimed the captain (for such he was), and before Ben could reply, continued:

"How is it you were not picked up? Did they not lower a boat?"

"Yes, they lowered the boat, but it was pulled almost directly away from me!"

"But they saw you fall. They must have known you would be carried in this direction!"

"Yes," replied Ben, who was beginning to suspect his fall was no more accidental than the directing of the boat away from him.

"Then a great knave, or a worse fool was in charge of the boat!" declared the captain, and turning to one of his officers, directed him to furnish Ben with a change of clothing.

"You will then come to me in the cabin!" he ordered, as the midshipman turned away.

The officer having Ben in charge spoke no English, which saved his answering troublesome questions while below, but not so when he reached the cabin.

Waving him to a seat, and pointing to a bottle and glasses on a swinging tray, the captain said:

"Now, monsieur, when you have refreshed yourself, tell me who you are, and why your ship is in these waters. She is an American—that I know already."

Somewhat prepared for this, Ben replied:

"My name is Ben Darrel, a midshipman on board the vessel I've just fallen from, but I cannot tell you why she is in these waters."

"That is to say you will not?" asked the captain, smiling grimly.

"As an officer and a gentleman yourself, you know I cannot!"

"Ha! That is well said, but aboard your own ship, you would say a pirate instead of a gentleman! This is 'The Dove'—a French privateer, and I am Jules Vernier, her captain. Now you will understand why I must know something of your ship."

Captain Vernier paused, and twirled his mustache reflectively before asking:

"What is her name? You can answer that!"

"The 'United States.'"

"And it is after myself and others of my trade she is sent!"

Ben did not reply, and the captain continued:

"It is well. You would have said so were it otherwise. Now, how many men and how many guns does she carry?"

"I will not tell you!" replied Ben decisively.

"But you will, my young friend! Do you know what it is to be hung up by the thumbs—triced up? Well, you shall hang until you tell me."

Ben made no reply. He knew what the agony of being triced up must be, and determined to make a struggle to escape it, but the smiling, suave captain sitting opposite, seemed to read his thoughts.

"No, no, my young friend," he urged, drawing a pistol, "don't attempt it! You will have until daylight to think over what I have said. Now you will go below."

The captain struck a bell as he spoke, and consigned Ben to the care of two of the crew, with strict orders to watch him closely.

On reaching the head of the companionway, Ben saw the United States scarcely a quarter mile away, lying to, and also noted that "The Dove" was now under full sail, evidently intending to slip by the frigate.

Although one stood on each side of Ben, neither of the guards had their hands on him, and, before they realized what he was about, the midshipman knocked one down and plunged over the side of the ship!

CHAPTER IV.

A STERN CHASE BUT NOT A LONG ONE.

THERE was no moon, and it was quite dark when Ben plunged into the water, and this probably saved him from the shots that were fired after him.

With every rag of canvas set, and a whole-sail breeze blowing, The Dove flew on, while the midshipman, swimming strong and fast, headed for the frigate, and seeing it would be dangerous to attempt pursuit, the privateer was kept on her course.

Striking a favoring current, Ben was soon alongside the United States, and climbing the fore-chains made his appearance before the startled watch, who took him for a ghost, and fled before him.

Captain Stewart and Lieutenant Ballard were on the quarter-deck conversing about Ben when they, too, were startled by his sudden appearance, as much as his exclamation:

"Captain! There goes one of the pirates! I've just escaped from her!"

A man quick to perceive and prompt to act, Captain Stewart did not ask for details—time enough for that when they were under way.

"Get under way at once!" he cried to Ballard,

and leaving the lieutenant to attend to that, took Ben below where, while the latter was changing his clothes, he related the particulars of his double escape.

By the time Ben had finished, the frigate was under way and about two miles astern of the pirate brig, which—the moon having risen—was plainly visible.

It soon became apparent that the frigate, fast as she was, had met her match, for at the end of a half-hour the distance between the vessels remained the same, and Captain Stewart grew impatient.

"Try that bow-chaser on her, Ballard," he ordered.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the cheery response, as the speaker went forward to direct the gunner, and quickly his voice was heard:

"Let fly at her top-hamper, Morris! Give us daylight through her canvas!"

A moment later a flood of red fire and white smoke burst from the fore-castle, and scarcely had the report of the gun died away when the foretop-sail of the brig was hanging downward!

"Split my top-sails but that was a good one!" cried the boatswain, while a cheer arose from every man aboard, but an answering shot from the brig's stern-chaser cut short their joy, and their own maintopmast at the same time.

Without waiting for the order, the men sprang into the main rigging, and into the tops to clear away the wreckage, and, this done, both vessels were again on an equal footing.

"That fellow sails as though he would poke the wind's eye out!" exclaimed the captain after a few minutes, and addressing Ballard, asked:

"Can't we bring down some more of his light spars? We must close up with him!"

Before the lieutenant could reply, Ben, standing near by, remarked:

"The wind is freshening, sir, and we'll be a half-mile the better of it before they feel it. It's veering round on our quarter."

"Hang me, but the lad's right, Ballard! We are both dullards!" and turning to Ben, the captain asked jestingly:

"D'ye think ye could keep her closer to the wind?"

"Yes, sir. She could sail a point closer if the fore and mainsails were stiffened with a little water," replied Ben modestly, adding:

"We used to do that on my uncle's schooner."

"In Heaven's name, try it, Ballard! And, at the same time, throw another shot!"

As though they had heard the words, another shot from The Dove came whistling through the rigging but did no harm, nor did the return shot of the United States injure the sea rover.

But, it soon became apparent that Ben's hint was a valuable one, for the frigate began to crawl up on the brig, and, quick to perceive it, the pirate set his stern-chaser to work.

Shot after shot came whistling through rigging and canvas; one glanced harmlessly off the hull, and one sweeping across the deck sent three men to the care of the surgeon, but the United States kept on gaining until only a half-mile separated the vessels.

"Now, Morris, try your hand again!" cried Captain Stewart, and the gunner, eager and impatient for the order, sprung to his gun.

"'Tis the mast itself, and not the tops!" he muttered, as he sighted his piece, and, true to his word, the shot splintered the foremast of the brig, carrying death and destruction to all around it.

"A silver dollar for another pirate-pill like that!" cried Captain Stewart, while the men cheered Gunner Morris lustily.

The gunner and his mate were already at work, and before the confusion caused by the last shot had ceased, there was another flash, the dull boom of the gun, and the pirate's foremast, struck twice in the same place, tottered and fell over the side!

"Morris, thou art a very magician! Ballard! get your boarders ready! Every man to his station! Allen! look to your light sails!"

Going forward as he spoke, Captain Stewart directed the firing of the bow-gun, again and again raking the pirate's deck, dismounting two guns and cutting away "gingerbread" work generally from stem to stern, until Ballard was able to bring the "Long Tom" to bear on the sea rover.

This recalled Captain Stewart to the fact that he was now near enough to cross the stern of the pirate and deliver a broadside in passing, without danger to himself, for, hampered by the wreckage of the foremast, and of other lighter spars, The Dove was almost unmanageable.

"Bout ship!" he shouted. "Helm a-lee—let go and haul!"

The pirate, who, up to this, had been able to

bring only his stern-chaser into play, and now stood ready to exchange broadsides, was dumfounded by this sudden change.

He had been badly wounded, and was standing, pistol in hand, with his back to the mainmast, when the frigate wore around to cross his stern.

"Ten thousand devils!" he cried; "if she crosses we are down by the stern! *Haul down the flag!*"

It was done, barely in time to avoid the fire of the frigate as she swept by.

"Look out for that fellow, captain! He may mean mischief, yet."

But Captain Stewart did not need his lieutenant's caution, and wearing round again, lay to across the pirate's stern, saying to Ballard:

"Tell them to send their captain and twenty-five men aboard *unarmed*, or I'll blow them out of the water! And stop all repairs instantly!"

CHAPTER V.

SINKING THE DOVE.

THE tone in which Lieutenant Ballard delivered his captain's orders admitted of neither argument nor delay, but full five minutes elapsed before a large yawl left the brig's side.

Standing beside Captain Stewart, and with the faces of the two in the stern-sheets of the yawl plainly exposed to his sharp eyes, Ben Darrel said:

"Captain! You called for the captain of the brig, but unless pulling an oar he is not in the boat!"

"Thank you, my lad! Just tell Ballard to have the men ready to receive these scoundrels!" quietly replied Captain Stewart.

When the boat reached the schooner's side, the occupants were compelled to come up one by one, and as they reached the deck were met by two men who placed them in a solid body along the deck—just in front of the stern-chaser, now loaded with grapeshot.

"Hold hard!" cried Captain Stewart, as the man in charge of the boat attempted to come aboard. "Go back and get your captain! And get him *quick*, if you want to stay above water!"

"Fire! Fire, or you'll hang!" cried the man in the boat, but at the first word the crew of the United States fired a volley, and then, cutlass in hand, charged on the pirates.

But the latter were men fighting with halts round their necks, and, although half their number had been killed or wounded, they fought with the desperation born of despair—it was as well to be killed as captured.

Foremost in the charge on the pirates was Ben Darrel, and during the short but very hot fight that followed, the young midshipman distinguished himself to the extent of getting a bad wound in one shoulder.

As this was received in leading the men, and through the reckless courage exhibited by the midshipman, it was commented upon by the captain, who had witnessed it.

At the moment the pirate in the yawl shouted "Fire!" Captain Stewart fired on him, and that was the signal for the master gunner, Morris, to pour his broadside into the stern of the brig, and at the same time sweep her deck from taffrail to bowsprit.

The effect of this at fifty yards was terrible. As the pirate captain had said, the whole stern of the brig was blown away, and, with a convulsive heave that seemed almost human, she went down stern-first!

The fight on board the United States was over, practically, the moment the brig went down, and Captain Stewart stood looking regretfully at the spot where the prize had been destroyed, owing to the treachery of the pirates.

Suddenly he saw a man in gold-lace uniform come to the surface, clinging to a piece of wreckage, and ordered the boatswain to lower a boat for him.

"Lower the gig—jump, Donald!" he cried. "Get that fellow if you have to dive for him!"

It was Vernier, the sea rover captain, who had unconsciously grasped a part of a spar, and when brought on board he was unconscious.

"This is the fellow, is he not, Darrel?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir; that is Captain Vernier," replied the midshipman, who was standing near by, having his shoulder dressed.

"See what you can do for him, Parkes, when you are through with Darrel," ordered the captain, and then instructed the men to carry Vernier to his cabin.

Half an hour later Ben was summoned to the cabin, where he found the captain, the surgeon and Vernier.

The latter looked startled on seeing the midshipman, to whom Captain Stewart addressed the question:

"Darrel, were you mistaken, or is this Captain Vernier?"

"He is, by his own words, Captain Vernier," replied Ben.

"As much as you are Darrel!" retorted the pirate contemptuously.

He had been lying on a lounge, but now by a violent effort dragged himself to a sitting position, and continued:

"Captain Jules Vernier, or Julian Varney—which was his real name—is at the bottom of the sea. I, Richard Varney, his twin brother, was his second in command. In case of capture, whichever had the best opportunity was to plead forcible detention by the other and reveal his English nationality—but he is dead and I am dying, and it is useless.

"The ship and crew were French, as is that of me—"

Richard Varney paused, and sunk back on the lounge, causing his surprised listeners to believe it was from exhaustion, but after the surgeon had given him a stimulant he still remained quiet, although evidently in great pain and rapidly nearing the end.

"Why don't you continue?" asked Captain Stewart.

"I have said enough."

"What d'ye mean by saying this lad's name is not Darrel?"

The captain felt almost as much interested as Ben himself in this regard.

"Because it's not!" was the startling reply, and again dragging himself up, the dying man continued:

"You are Darrel, yes! But it is your Christian name. Your full-name—is—is—Darrel—Darrel—Dare—Dare—!"

"He made a desperate struggle to say the full name," said the surgeon, as Varney fell back.

"Is he dead?" asked Darrel, as we must now call him.

"Dead! Dead as a door nail!"

CHAPTER VI.

A WARD-ROOM FIGHT—THE SWORD.

RICHARD VARNEY had indeed appeared to struggle desperately to reveal Darrel's full name, but death had prevented his saying more, and bitter disappointment was expressed in the face of the captain as well as the midshipman.

"Well, my lad," said the former, "you've been treated rather scurvily. You had a full name until this fellow spoke, and left you only part of one."

"And, as that part may lead to the discovery of the balance, I would suggest that he adopt Darrel Dare," the surgeon remarked.

"A capital idea!" assented the captain; "what d'ye say, my lad?"

Darrel approved the proposition, and before noon every man Jack aboard the United States was aware that Ben Darrel of yesterday was Darrel Dare to-day which led to a row during the afternoon.

During the forenoon, Captain Stewart had publicly complimented the bravery of "Mr. Darrel Dare." This excited the jealousy of Midshipman Grace, who with Reeves, Donald (the boatswain), Armand (the master-at-arms), and Morris (the master gunner), happened to be in the ward-room when Darrel took out the sword he had won to clean it.

"Hello!" exclaimed Grace, "where did you get that sword?"

The tone was particularly insulting, but Darrel replied, very quietly:

"I took it from a cur who insulted a lady!"

"Did you know him? Know who he was?"

"I did not know him—you know as much about him as I do," replied Darrel, carelessly, disliking the question.

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Grace, flushing and starting from his seat.

"Mean!" echoed Darrel, in surprise. "I mean that I didn't know the fellow, or his name, if he had one."

"Oh! that's it!" retorted Grace, and then sneeringly: "I guess he had a name, though it would be a comical sight to see a fellow with a half-name (and not sure of that), taking a sword from a fellow with none at all."

That a row was imminent every one saw, and quite pleased at the prospect, suspended work on their various tasks.

Fights among the middies for supremacy in the ward-room, was the rule rather than the exception in those days, and Grace was fairly aching for one now.

He was older and heavier than Darrel, and

had no doubt of his ability to give the latter a "good hiding," but he was not to have the chance, just yet.

"You are quite a wit," was all the reply Darrel returned.

"And you are— Ah, I don't know quite what to call you!" sneered Grace.

"Don't trouble yourself. In the first place, it's none of your business, and if you did call, I shouldn't pay any attention to you," Darrel coolly declared.

"You wouldn't! Well, come here now, or I'll give you the best hiding you ever got!"

Darrel merely smiled, and went on with the work of polishing the sword, but when Grace arose and approached, he dropped it on a locker and wheeled around.

Something in Darrel's attitude caused the other to hesitate.

"Well, sir? What about that hiding?"

This question stung Grace, and he rushed at Darrel, intending to crush him by his superior weight; but the latter alertly stepped aside, and as the other passed, struck him a powerful blow under the ear, knocking him across the room, where he fell in a heap.

A couple of minutes elapsed before Grace was able to get up, and as he did so, Darrel remarked:

"D'ye know, Grace, I'm inclined to think you are the cur that owned this sword? I've just found your initials on it!"

"You lie!" cried Grace, making another furious rush, which Darrel easily eluded, and at once struck a straight right-hander that staggered his opponent, followed by an upper-cut that knocked him almost senseless again.

Darrel was no longer on the defensive, and without waiting for the other to arise, walked to where he was lying.

"Get up, you cur!" he said, sternly. "Get up and beg my pardon, or I'll pound you to within an inch of your miserable life, you contemptible specimen of a United States officer!"

Meantime Reeves had picked up the sword, and was examining it.

"By George!" he suddenly exclaimed; "Dare is right; it *does* bear Grace's initials."

As this was uttered, Grace scrambled to his feet, although hardly able to stand, and stood before his conqueror.

Reeves's words opened a loophole for retraction.

"It's not my sword," he said, sullenly; "but, if it's got my initials on it, I apologize."

Without a word Darrel turned, and taking the sword from Reeves, locked it up.

A general grin among the spectators of the battle followed, and as Grace slunk away, there were many joking inquiries as to the promised "hiding."

Darrel kept very quiet, and if questioned about the fight gave evasive answers, although morally certain he was correct regarding the ownership of the sword, and determined to ascertain the truth; but, in spite of his reserve, the story was soon known throughout the ship.

"It was too good to keep!" was the exclamation of Reeves when Darrel remonstrated with him for talking of the matter.

"And about that sword business, Darrel?" asked the midshipman.

"I'll prove that when we get back."

Grace, standing back of the mainmast, heard this, and resolved that it should never be done.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIENDISH PLOT SPOILED.

AFTER cruising about for several days, Captain Stewart headed for Jamaica, having fallen in with a trader who informed him that several privateers, so-called, and one downright pirate, were in that vicinity.

The latter was described as the typical long, low-lying, rakish schooner, white in color and of great speed, the only peculiarity about her being that she was officered by white men, and manned by blacks.

So, Captain Stewart headed for the island of Jamaica, passing the sunken town of Port Royal, and entering the bay at Kingston, just before sunset.

As the men stood gazing at the town during the evening, one of them remarked:

"For sharks, it beats any spot in the world! A cannon-ball couldn't get to the bottom before one of 'em'd snatch it. So ye kin judge what chance one of us'd have."

Among the group listening to this was Grace, and he made a mental note of it.

Darrel had fallen overboard once—possibly he might again! his evil thoughts took word form.

As usual, native boats swarmed out early next morning, and, as the captain left the ship, dozens of the natives were on and around the vessel.

The captain went ashore in the hope of obtaining information relative to the corsair, and as the heat during the day is excessive, did not intend to return until sunset.

Darrel, now a great favorite with the captain, was in charge of the boat, and consequently sat in the stern-sheets with Captain Stewart.

About an hour after the boat left, a villainous-looking negro came aboard with some fruit.

He was rather late with his wares, but something in his countenance seemed to attract Grace, who purchased quite a quantity, and held a long conversation with the fellow in a language totally unknown—or rather not understood by those around, namely, Spanish.

Grace was well educated and the best linguist on board, and several of those who noticed him remarked that he was "showing off" his knowledge.

And at the conclusion of the conversation, when he went below to pay the negro, it was set down to a desire to "show off his purse," for it was well known that he carried the heaviest one on board—being liberally supplied by a wealthy uncle, whose heir it was expected he would be.

"Come to-morrow! I'll buy more!" called Grace, as the negro rowed away.

Darkness comes suddenly in those latitudes. The United States was lying two miles off-shore, and when the captain's gig was seen putting off just after sunset, lights were hung all over the port side of the schooner, for it would be dark before the boat reached her.

While awaiting the arrival of the gig, Grace appeared to be very nervous, and watched her with great interest until sudden darkness shut her from sight.

Shark-fishing had been indulged in during the land breeze hours—from eight to ten in the morning and four to six in the afternoon, which are the only hours during which a white man can do more than exist—and two monsters were caught, almost as soon as the salt pork was in the water.

Grace was watching the fishing with great interest.

At length the gig arrived near the side, but before reaching it, Donald, the boatswain, called:

"Ahoy the gig! Come to the starboard!"

The gig was accordingly put around the bow of the schooner, and as it rounded, almost ran down a shore-boat containing five men, one of whom was clinging to the forechains.

"Ho there! Lights forward! Hold on to that boat, Martin!" cried Captain Stewart.

The bow oar grasped the gunwale of the other boat, drawing the gig alongside; Captain Stewart and Darrel both leveled pistols, while the boatswain and several of the crew held battle-lanterns over the fore-castle head.

"Down with a boat and haul these skulkers aboard!" cried the captain, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the five men were aboard the schooner.

All five were blacks, and when questioned as to their business, shook their heads—they could not understand English.

The negroes of Jamaica and the Black Republic are most notorious thieves, and Captain Stewart was about to set it down as a thieving expedition when Donald said:

"Pr'aps Mr. Grace can find out, captain. He war talkin' to this chap" (indicating the villainous-looking negro) "all mornin'."

The captain turned sharply on Grace, and asked:

"What d'ye know about this?"

"Nothing, sir, except that I bought some fruit, and talked a little Spanish with him."

Grace looked a little pale, but it might have been the light of the lanterns.

"Very good!" exclaimed the captain, in a tone that meant very bad. "Now find out what brought them under our bows."

The middy shot a suspicious glance at Donald, but the latter's countenance was absolutely wooden, and he spoke to the negro in Spanish.

"I promised to buy a lot of fruit from him to-morrow," explained Grace, "and fearing we would sail to-night, he came out to know if he could deliver it to-night."

"A likely story! But we have no time to bother with them—let them go! Ballard, we sail before daylight. Come down with me!"

If Grace was only purchasing fruit, he had a queer way of talking of it, for as he paced the deck, he muttered:

"Confound that meddling idiot! But for him that half-named hound would have been

food for the sharks by this time! They couldn't miss him—he would be the last to leave the boat—he's so careful, blast him!"

Darrel was the last man to leave the gig that night.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WARNING—THE PIRATE SCHOONER.

When the captain and lieutenant went below, Darrel was about to do the same, when Donald touched him on the arm, saying:

"Just a word wi' ye."

Rather surprised, Darrel followed the boatswain forward to the fore-castle head.

"You'll just mind I'm accusin' nobody, but if ye'll take a fool's advice, don't stand in the shrouds, or lean over the taffrail, while Mither Grace is very near ye—it's no healthy!"

The boatswain turned away, but Darrel would not let him go.

"Hold on, Fraser!" he said. "You've told me either too much or too little. Just let me have a little light as to why you give me this advice. What do you know?"

But Donald was cautious—he would not speak—for the present, at any rate.

"I speak because I like ye," he said, "but I'll say no more the night."

As Donald was noted for his firmness, or obstinacy as some called it, Darrel simply thanked him for the warning.

Next morning before dawn all hands were on deck, sail was set, and the United States got under way.

"Keep her sou'-sou'west!" ordered Allen who was the sailing-master.

The previous day, the captain had obtained information that led him to believe those he was after were to be found in the Caribbean Sea, probably in the vicinity of Greytown, if not nearer.

According to the officials, the pirate schooner and privateers were to be found in the vicinity of Hayti, but there was good reason to suspect that this was given simply to mislead him.

By adroit questioning, and the use of a little money among the natives, Captain Stewart found his suspicions were correct, and he had little doubt of finding his men below instead of above Kingston, nor was he mistaken.

On the morning of the second day out from Kingston, there came a hail from aloft hailing the deck:

"Sail, ho!"

"Hello!" cried Allen; "whereaway?"

"Straight ahead, sir, and standing toward us!"

The lieutenant sprang into the rigging, and from the foretop made out a schooner under full sail bearing down on the United States, and instantly notified the captain.

"'Tis our friend without doubt!" exclaimed the captain, after a long look through his glass. "Now, Ballard, get all hands below except enough to work her."

"And, my lads!" he continued, addressing the crew, "prepare to meet, and sweep from the high seas, the worst devil that ever sailed 'em! Bo'sun, see that the men are served with a double allowance of rum!"

A hearty cheer followed the captain's words, and then those left above began to cover the deck guns, while with closed ports the frigate bounded forward to meet the pirate.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the United States was built on a peculiar plan.

A false frame or model was first erected, and then over this was laid a shell or body of inch oak planks, forming the complete figure of the vessel; pitch and oakum were then used, and over them a cross course of inch planks was laid, and so on until the proper strength and thickness were obtained. The vessel, so constructed, was elastic and buoyant in an unequalled degree, throwing off external violence, such as a cannon-ball, a blow on a rock or against another vessel, somewhat as, on a smaller scale, a basket would resist external force.

With these advantages, the United States was a remarkably fast sailer, and as the pirate drew nearer, Captain Stewart said:

"Better get all your light sails in, Allen. We must let him get near enough, to be sure of boarding us."

Captain Stewart, Lieutenant Allen and Darrel—the only middy allowed on deck—had discarded everything in the way of uniform, and there was nothing to excite the suspicion of the swiftly-approaching pirate.

Soon the two vessels were only a mile apart, and Captain Stewart said:

"Darrel! Pass the word below to get ready—we'll be at it in ten minutes!"

He had hardly spoken before a shot was fired

across the bows of the United States, and, with a grim smile, he continued:

"Heave to! And be ready to serve the guns when they board us. Grape and canister and double-shotted, are they not, Allen?"

"Yes, sir. They'll get a warm reception."

Nearer and nearer came the pirate, until but two hundred yards separated them, and again Darrel was sent below with orders to be ready to open fire at any instant, and for all but gunners to come on deck as stealthily as possible and lie along the port side—over which the boarders were certain to come, if at all.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTURE OF "THE HAWK."

"Be careful, now! Here they come!" cautioned Captain Stewart, as his men began to come from below.

But there was scarcely any necessity for the caution. The pirates, already regarding the United States as a prize, were entirely unsuspecting of danger, and the boat they lowered contained only eleven men—ten blacks and one white.

This was a disappointment to Captain Stewart, who had expected a big boarding-party, and throwing aside all disguise, he ordered:

"Give 'em a broadside, Morris! Fill your mainyard and jib, and bear down for boarding, Allen! Ready there with your boarders, Ballard!"

Confused and dismayed by the sudden appearance of so many men and guns—of teeth where only gums were expected, the gunners had stripped the guns and delivered a raking broadside before the pirates could realize how they had been trapped.

At such close range the effect of the grape and canister on the crowded deck of the pirate was horrifying, and before they recovered from it the United States bore down and grappled with The Hawk—which was the sister-ship of The Dove.

"Boarders away!" thundered Captain Stewart, himself leading the way.

A hearty cheer from the men, and a general spring for the deck of the pirate, answered the captain's order.

The first man to strike a blow was Captain Stewart, but right at his heels, and fortunately for him, was his favorite middy, and alongside the latter, the brawny boatswain, Donald Fraser.

Captain Stewart, tall, powerful and young, with the strength and courage of a lion, struck terror into the hearts of the pirates, as sword in hand he literally mowed his way toward the white captain.

The latter, somewhat recovered from his surprise, was standing aft encouraging his men, and perceiving Captain Stewart to be a tower of strength in himself, cried out:

"Twenty doubloons to the man who kills him! Away now! Down with him!"

The pirate captain led the attack, but another meant to win the money—the boatswain of The Hawk, a gigantic negro.

"The money is mine!" cried the negro, springing forward.

For a few minutes the fight centered around the giant negro and Captain Stewart, when the latter suddenly slipped and fell.

With a yell the negro sprang at the captain to give him the *coup de grace*, but at the same instant Darrel sprang to meet him, interposing his sword to throw off the descending blow.

"Well done! Hold him, my lad! Hold him a moment!" cried Ballard, fighting from forward, but his assistance was not required, for the same pool of blood that caused the captain to fall, upset the negro.

"Good-by t'ye, my hearty!" cried the boatswain of the United States, and as the other endeavored to regain his feet, cleft his skull in two.

This gave Captain Stewart an opportunity to arise, and an instant later he was upon his feet leading the attack, supported on either side by the young middy and the boatswain.

The fight, however, was practically over a few minutes later, being ended by a fortunate thrust of Ballard's sword, which brought the pirate captain to the deck.

With the fall of the pirate captain, followed by a charge which Captain Stewart headed, the fight was ended, and the black flag hauled down, although the negroes were still in the majority.

Dividing the pirates into two parties, Captain Stewart shut a part in the forehold of each vessel, and putting Lieutenant Ballard and a prize crew aboard The Hawk, set the men at work

repairing the damage done in the action, which was confined almost entirely to the rigging of the pirate.

"I must thank you for my life, Donald!" said Captain Stewart on returning to his vessel.

"No, sir, beggin' your pardon, it's Mither Darrel, not me," replied Donald; "he turned off the cutlass just as it war a-comin' down."

"Quite right, Donald!" confirmed Lieutenant Ballard, who had come aboard to look after his things.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the captain in surprise. "Mr. Dare, come here!"

Dare came aft, and was greeted with:

"My lad, it seems I owe you my life! Let me thank you for what I didn't see, as well as what I did, and rest assured it will not be forgotten either here or at home."

Darrel flushed with pleasure at this public compliment so strongly expressed.

"You can go aboard the prize with Mr. Ballard," continued the captain, "and act as his second in command!"

Surprise and pleasure fought for mastery in Darrel's countenance, while the former was depicted on the faces of those within hearing.

On reaching *The Hawk*, Darrel went below with the lieutenant, where they found the pirate captain, who had been removed from the deck.

He was the only white man of his crew left alive, was badly hurt, and Captain Stewart hoped to gain some information from him. The surgeon had, therefore, hurried to dress his wound.

The entrance of the two officers caused the patient to turn his head, and, on seeing Darrel, to start and utter an exclamation of surprise.

CHAPTER X.

MORE MYSTERY—DISAPPEARANCE OF THE HAWK.

"WHAT'S the matter with you?" asked Parkes, angrily.

He did not like the job, and would have much preferred seeing the pirate hanging from the yard-arm.

"Nothing—'twas pain," replied the patient, in excellent English.

"Don't lie! You started on seeing one of these gentlemen—Mr. Darrel."

The pirate captain looked puzzled on hearing the name, which the surgeon unconsciously used instead of Dare, but made no reply to the other's assertion.

Darrel's experience with Varney had rendered him suspicious, and he said:

"You seem to know me?"

"Perhaps I do. I cannot tell—yet," replied the pirate, cunningly.

He knew his wound was not necessarily fatal, that he might be—probably was, destined for the rope, and seeing Darrel was an officer and much interested in him (the pirate), or what he was supposed to know, would say nothing more.

Shortly after Grace came on board, and then, repairs being made, both vessels proceeded under easy sail to Kingston Harbor.

During the two days' run Midshipman Grace was in the company of the wounded pirate almost all the time, and they became quite intimate.

"Who is that young officer?" asked the pirate, the first time they were alone.

"Hardly knows himself, I guess," replied Grace, adding: "Until we sunk *The Dove*—"

"Until what?"

"Until we sunk *The Dove*," repeated Grace, eying the other curiously.

"Well?"

"Well, until then he was known as Ben Darrel, but now he is Darrel Dare—"

"Darrel Dare!" exclaimed the pirate, excitedly, and then regarding Grace sharply, asked: "Did he learn nothing further than that—than his name?"

"Why, is that the name—the full name?" counter-questioned Grace, and then went on to relate Darrel's story, as he had heard it.

As the middy proceeded, the pirate grew more and more thoughtful, and when the story was finished, made no comment.

"Mr. Grace, you're wanted on deck," said a seaman, sticking his head into the cabin, and the middy hurried above, but not before noticing that his name appeared to startle the pirate captain, even more than Darrel's had.

It was some time before Grace returned to the cabin, but when he did he saw that the pirate's interest in him had not abated.

"Mr. Darrel seems to have climbed over your head," he said when Grace had seated himself, adding:

"You are his senior?"

"Yes—but he's the favorite!" was the bitter response.

"Why not join a ship where you would be appreciated? A French privateer offers better chances than this."

"Yes—better chances of getting where you are!" retorted Grace.

"Not so! With the money I have, I could fit out a privateer that could laugh at anything you have in your navy."

The pirate spoke earnestly, and watched closely the effect of his words.

"The money you have!" exclaimed Grace in derision. "Why, you may be swinging from the yard-arm before forty-eight hours!"

"Mr. Grace," said the other, after a few minutes' thoughtful silence, "Mr. Grace, you are from Boston, if I am not greatly mistaken. You are expecting to be your uncle's heir, but I can assure you that the events of the past few days have rendered your chances very slender indeed."

Grace stared at the speaker in surprise, and the pirate continued:

"Listen, and don't interrupt me, for there's but little time to do what you *must* do, and some one may enter."

The story which the pirate proceeded to relate, affected Grace very deeply, and, notwithstanding the injunction of silence, he protested vigorously several times, and again assented eagerly, but the first words of the story, which caused the middy to shrink back in horrified surprise, seemed to have given the other complete control of him.

"Now," said the pirate in conclusion, "there's as much gold and diamonds in a bag under this couch, as a man can carry, and you may have what you wish, but see that I am not moved until we drop anchor in Kingston Harbor."

Grace bowed assent, and arose to leave the cabin, saying:

"It is better for me to go on deck."

"You don't seem very happy over seeing me," said the other, with a grim smile.

"Nor am I!" replied Grace savagely.

"And yet you'll owe me the removal of a rival, and the discovery to you of a method of revenge as well as of helping one—"

"Stop! For Heaven's sake say nothing of that!" cried Grace quitting the cabin.

The two vessels entered Kingston Harbor at sunset, anchoring close together, and many of the prize crew, including Lieutenant Ballard and Grace, went aboard the *United States* for the night—the quarters there being in better shape and sanitary condition than they could possibly be aboard *The Hawk*, with its large crew of negroes, while those of the latter aboard the first-named vessel, were transferred back to their own quarters.

"They'll be safe enough for to-night, and to-morrow we'll be rid of 'em," said Lieutenant Ballard, but when to-morrow's sun arose *The Hawk* was gone!

CHAPTER XI.

THE DRUNKEN (?) SAILORS.

THE discovery that *The Hawk* had slipped her cable and stolen away during the night, was made by Allen just after coming on watch, and after looking in every direction for the missing vessel, he notified the captain of the fact.

There was a sharp though hurried investigation when Captain Stewart came on deck, but the only point made clear was that Midshipman Dare and six seamen, including the boatswain, were missing with *The Hawk*.

The vessels had anchored a cable's-length apart, and each of the officers who had stood watch during the night, declared the pirate to have been in view all that time—which in some one case must, of course, have been a mistake or an untruth.

Captain Stewart was sorely puzzled and very angry. There were some stores needed, and directing Ballard to procure them at once, he ordered the gig and went ashore.

"Ah, captain! I was just about to call on you!" exclaimed a man in military attire, who met the gig at the landing.

"Why?"

"Several of your crew were found this morning just below here. They are in a *very* stupid condition, and unable to give any account of themselves!"

"So! That's it, is it?" exclaimed the captain, savagely. "I'll get an account from them—the drunken lubbers!"

"Where is the other vessel, captain?" asked the military gentleman, innocently, after Captain Stewart had dispatched a message for a file of men and the big yawl, to bring the drunkards aboard.

Captain Stewart did not show his suspicions of the speaker's ignorance, but asked just as innocently:

"Why? Did you not see her going out this morning, heading for Port au Prince?"

This, of course, was mere guesswork, but the bait took, and the other suddenly remembered that he *had* seen the missing vessel bearing in that direction.

"We must bear down toward Savanna la Mar, Ballard! Never mind the stores—just get those lubbers aboard and weigh anchor. I'm satisfied that fellow was sending us in the opposite direction."

Captain Stewart had returned to the *United States* without leaving the landing, and now only awaited the arrival of the yawl to get under way.

The drunkards had to be hoisted aboard, and when the captain ordered them put in irons the surgeon interposed:

"Captain, these men are drugged!"

"Drugged!"

"Yes, sir. If put in irons they will probably die without getting out of the stupor they are in."

"Very well, then. Get them out of it if you can."

Lieutenant Allen, meantime, had got under way—standing down the coast of Jamaica toward Savanna la Mar, with every sail set and trimmed to make the most of the fresh breeze that had just sprung up.

"We're getting the best of this," observed the captain, coming on deck after breakfast. "How many knots are we logging?"

"Eight, in the last hour, sir!" replied Allen, adding:

"If it continues freshening this way, it will soon be blowing a half gale."

"Never mind. Don't take in an inch until it's absolutely necessary! I'd rather risk every rag being blown out of the bolt-ropes, than lose the benefit of this."

Mr. Allen's expectation was soon realized, but the increased wind made up for the loss of canvas, and even with her topsails hoisted, and jibs close reefed, the *United States* flew along, logging eight and nine knots an hour.

"We must be coming up on him hand over hand!" exclaimed the captain gleefully.

"If he's ahead!" returned Allen.

"Of course, he's ahead! But that reminds me—I must see what Parkes is doing."

Going below, Captain Stewart found the boatswain, Donald Fraser, just coming round, and finding him able to talk, asked:

"How came you to go ashore?"

"Don't know anythin' about it, sir," replied the boatswain in a weak voice.

"They were all drugged and carried ashore, captain. Trust me, you'll find that's what happened," said the surgeon.

Captain Stewart knew Donald never drank to excess, but he was puzzled, and angry.

"How could they be drugged? Who was there to do it? What was there to do it with? Don't talk nonsense, Parkes! They were drinking."

"Very good, captain, but I can assure you it's snuff and not rum, that these men are suffering from," replied the surgeon.

"Snuff! Nonsense!"

"Not at all, captain. There is scarcely anything that will stupefy a man so thoroughly."

"But who could do it?" persisted the captain, and turning to Donald, asked:

"D'ye know anything about Mr. Dare?"

"No, sir—poor lad, I hope he was put ashore wi' the rest."

"Humph! Ye seem to like him—ye don't think, then, that 'twas he *doctored* you?"

"No, sir!" replied Donald, stoutly.

"Well, then, where is he? You were *all* drugged, and he's the only one missing!" said the captain, giving expression to the thoughts of all on board.

"It certainly does look strange," observed the surgeon, "but I hope no harm has come to the lad."

"So do I, sir. You may be sure he's either a prisoner on the schooner or—or dead."

The break in the boatswain's voice as he uttered the last words caused the surgeon to look at him in surprise.

"Imagine so much feeling in such a tough nut!" thought Mr. Parkes.

CHAPTER XII.

PURSuing THE HAWK—A HARD FIGHT.

NOTWITHSTANDING Donald's faith in Darrel, there was a queer feeling on board the *United States* regarding his disappearance, and Grace's statement that he had seen him on the fore-

castle of The Hawk at midnight did not serve to allay this feeling, which was almost suspicion, for the men were found ashore about that time.

The United States was within fifty miles of Savanna la Mar, when a strange vessel was discovered on the weather-beam, bearing down to them with all the canvas she could spread.

"Can you make out her hull, Mr. Allen?" cried the captain, hailing the other at the mast-head.

"No, sir; but she rises very fast."

"What d'ye think of her—from spars and canvas?" continued the captain, when Allen descended.

"She's very taunt, sir, and her canvas looks foreign. A cruiser she certainly is, and we may as well get ready for her."

"The sooner the better! Clear the deck and beat to quarters."

So rapid was the stranger, that by the time the captain's orders were obeyed she was not two miles away.

The vessel rounded to as soon as she had reduced her sails on the same tack as the United States, displaying her broadside.

"A corvette, sir—twenty-two guns, French, by the rake of her stern, French-rigged—French all over, in fact," said Allen, observing her through his glass.

"A privateer, sure enough! there goes the tricolor!" exclaimed Ballard.

The corvette gradually edged down until almost within point-blank range.

"Suppose we lay the maintopsail to the mast, captain," suggested Allen; "then we'll see what she's up to."

"Very well, Allen, we'll try it; but I don't think he'll bear down on us. Square the main yards!"

As soon as the frigate hove-to, the privateer crossed her on the opposite tack until well abaft the beam and then wore round, ranging up on the weather quarter.

The United States had already filled her maintopsail to be in command, and Captain Stewart now cried:

"Hard down! Fly your jib-sheet and check head braces! Lively now, lads!"

The corvette had put her helm up and paid off to pass under his stern and rake him; but this maneuver was foiled, and, as the United States was thrown up on the wind, broadsides were exchanged.

As usual, the result was the cutting away of spars and rigging, as well as a few of both ship's companies.

"Well done, Allen! Well done!" cried the captain, as the young lieutenant at the wheel again checkmated the attempt of the Frenchman to rake as she ranged up after tacking, but instead was compelled to exchange broadsides.

The effect of the second broadside was much more severe than the first, and for a few minutes the ships were well separated, the frigate running off the wind, while the corvette was too crippled to work rapidly.

The United States had received five shots in her hull (which, owing to her construction, scarcely more than marked her), three men killed and six wounded, three main shrouds cut in two, and her mainmast badly splintered.

The corvette had suffered more in her spars and rigging—the foremast being nearly cut in two, the mainyard shattered and her wheel knocked to atoms, which obliged them to steer on the lower deck.

Without any further attempt at maneuvering, the privateer ranged up again to renew the combat, but it was now Captain Stewart's turn.

Allen skillfully put the frigate across the corvette's stern, and in passing poured in a raking broadside which created terrible havoc.

Wearing round again, Allen passed across the privateer's stern, delivering another raking broadside, bringing down the injured foremast and shattered mainyard.

"Bout ship and bear down on her!" cried Captain Stewart. "All hands to board—steady, so! Be quick now, lads! Quartermaster, my sword!"

Conning so as to sheer alongside, Allen carried away the privateer's topmasts, which, being drawn to windward by the pressure of the backstays, fell over and became entangled in the rigging of the frigate, thus preventing the vessels from separating.

"Boarders away!" cried Captain Stewart.

"Boarders away!" echoed Ballard.

The rapidity of the junction and impetuosity of the attack, combined with the two raking broadsides, caused such confusion that the privateer's men were only half armed, and totally unprepared to repel the boarders.

This, however, only made matters even, for the corvette carried a very large crew, and a desperate struggle ensued, the deck being contested inch by inch, blow for blow, neither side asking quarter.

The voices of Captain Stewart and Lieutenant Ballard on one side, and the captain of the corvette on the other, rallied and encouraged the men until the two captains met, and then the struggle centered around them.

Both were powerful men and skillful swordsmen, and for a few minutes the issue was doubtful, but a stray bullet decided the matter, killing the French captain and settling the combat.

The fall of their captain disheartened the Frenchmen, and the tri-color was hauled down.

"A fine prize, Ballard, but dearly won," said the captain, as they returned to the frigate.

"Yes, sir; we couldn't stand many such victories," assented the lieutenant.

"I'm afraid we'll muster pretty slim for the business we have in hand."

"Too slim, I fear," returned the captain.

"And The Hawk and Darrel?" asked Ballard.

"Will you abandon him?"

"What! D'ye think he's a prisoner?" asked the captain, in surprise, and Ballard answered, calmly:

"I do."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE HAWK ESCAPED—DARREL A PRISONER.

AND now to return to Darrel Dare and The Hawk.

It was just after Ballard left the prize, that Grace, who was about to depart, informed Darrel that the pirate captain wished to speak to him.

On going below, Darrel found the pirate sitting on the edge of his couch, with a tray before him containing two pots of tea, a bottle of brandy, and various edibles.

"Such kind treatment looks suspicious, Mr. Darrel," said the pirate, "but if it is my last supper, I would be glad of your company. Will you join me?"

Darrel, always very kind-hearted, and sorry for the pirate, said:

"Yes, certainly."

"A little brandy, then?"

"No, thank you—tea," replied Darrel.

The pirate captain looked somewhat disappointed, but, through entertaining talk and hinting at his knowledge of Darrel's history, managed to detain the middy for over an hour.

While Darrel was below, the men above were eating, and quite surprised, too, at the fine supper prepared for them, which included many hot Spanish dishes, and any quantity of tea.

An hour after supper in the forecabin usually over, Darrel came on deck to find the men still eating and drinking and looking rather queer.

He did not know what to make of it, and blamed himself for remaining below so long—yet the men were not drunk, and he determined to keep watch himself and say nothing for the present, hoping the men would recover themselves.

Striking the time regularly himself, Darrel waited until seven bells (half-past eleven), and then went into the forecabin, determined either to arouse the men or hail the United States.

Finding the men lying about like so many logs, and about as easy to arouse, the middy started to leave the forecabin, but had hardly turned his back when he was grasped from behind and thrown to the deck.

A big black hand prevented any outcry, while others bound him, and then he was gagged.

The forecabin was swarming with negroes!

A few minutes later Darrel saw his companions carried out of the forecabin, while he was left behind.

Soon the motion of The Hawk made him think she was moving, and he was right. She had slipped her cable and was drifting out to sea.

All this happened during Grace's watch.

At the expiration of about two hours, Darrel was released and told to go to the cabin, and there being nothing else to do, he obeyed the order—carefully guarded by the brawny negro who gave it.

In the cabin he found the captain, and another white man whom he had never seen before, engaged with a bottle of brandy and a box of cigars.

"Well, my lad," laughed the former, "how d'ye find yourself? Come, don't look so dismal! Join us in a glass of brandy."

Darrel shook his head, and asked what had become of the men.

"I sent 'em ashore as a present to Captain

Stewart. Don't be alarmed about 'em—they'll be all right to-morrow, or next day."

"Why did you keep me?"

"Oh—I took a fancy to you!" replied the other, smilingly. "I heard you were something of a sailor, and I'm short of officers. So I thought I'd give you a chance to make a man of yourself as my second officer."

"And am I to have no voice in the matter?" asked Darrel, quietly.

"I don't see what you can say—except to thank me, and that we'll pass over."

"But I am an American officer already, and have not the slightest desire or intention of leaving the service."

"Indeed!" said the pirate, sneeringly. "And don't you realize that, at daylight to-morrow, you'll be considered to have deserted the American service for that of Captain Andre of The Hawk?"

"That may be, but it doesn't make it true, for I neither have nor will," replied Darrel, preserving a calm exterior, but groaning inwardly.

"Be careful, my lad! We are now fairly under way, and at daylight will be miles away from the cursed frigate. You shall have time to consider the offer—many a man of twice your years would jump at the chance—but don't forget that *I never carry passengers!*"

The freebooter paused to note the effect of the threat, and was rather pleased to see that Darrel remained—at least outwardly—unmoved.

"You're too good to walk the plank!" he exclaimed, admiringly. "And you won't be fool enough to do it, I imagine. Take any berth you can find here aft until you've decided. I must keep a guard over you till then."

"It is useless—but how long am I to have?" asked the middy, as the negro approached.

"Well, I'm in no hurry; to-morrow at noon will do," and as Darrel turned away, the Sea Rover added:

"Don't forget that walking the plank is very unhealthy exercise at sea!"

And leaving the two pirates laughing at the ghastly jest, Darrel sought his berth, but not to rest.

He was tortured more by thought of losing The Hawk, and of what Captain Stewart and his comrades would think of his disappearance, than his impending fate, for, needless to say, Darrel Dare had not the faintest idea of becoming a sea free-lance.

Still, life is sweet. Again, if he died at noon, he could never vindicate himself, and at times Darrel was sorely tempted to do as he had been done by, namely, trick the pirate by pretending to accept his offer, and then take advantage of the first opportunity to escape, or turn against him.

Again and again this temptation came to him, as he lay thinking of what would be said of his disappearance with The Hawk, and it was not hard to surmise what that would be.

But duplicity was foreign to Darrel's nature, and he rejected the idea.

It was bad enough to be suspected without appearing to deserve the suspicion.

So, when morning brought the negro to summon him to breakfast, Darrel was fully prepared and expectant of death at noon!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STORM, AND AN ESCAPE.

"WELL, made your decision yet?" asked Captain Andre next morning.

They were at breakfast in the cabin—the captain and Darrel, the latter being treated very courteously, but it was the velvet claw of the tiger.

"I have not yet changed my mind," replied Darrel.

It was only prolonging the agony for a few hours, he thought, but he might as well live it out.

"Very good," returned Andre. "You know the time, and if there's a black second officer at noon, you must blame yourself for the consequences."

Breakfast over, the two went on deck and relieved the first officer, who, as he went below for breakfast, said:

"We'll have to shorten sail pretty soon; there's a storm brewing."

"And it will soon burst," rejoined the captain, with a glance at the sky.

But, like Captain Stewart, the pirate was determined to take advantage of the storm, and at first would do nothing more than take a reef in the top-ails; but he was quickly compelled to furl them as well as all the light sails.

The Hawk was experiencing the full fury of

the gale, only the tail of which struck the United States, for the former was headed almost due South for Carthage, then the home of the West Indian pirates, while the latter was bearing westward for Savanna la Mar.

Under nothing but a storm staysail and balance-reefed foresail The Hawk scudded before the gale, which did not abate until she was more than half-way across the Caribbean Sea.

True seaman that he was, Darrel remained on deck all day, rendering assistance in the management of the vessel and making valuable suggestions, which Captain Andre invariably adopted.

Nothing further was said about Darrel's joining The Hawk, and at night the captain said:

"You had better get something to eat, and then turn in for awhile. It looks as if this was going to keep on all night."

"I think it is going down, and you might try a bit of the mainsail," returned Darrel.

"Eh! D'ye think so?" exclaimed the pirate, staring at Darrel in astonishment.

"I do; she'll surely stand it. I've done it myself in worse than this now is."

"Let out a reef in that mainsail!" ordered the captain, and after watching the effect for a couple minutes, turned to the middy.

"By gosh, you're right!" he exclaimed, admiringly. "Let's go below."

Leaving the first officer, Janvrin, in charge, they went below to supper, and, being drenched to the skin, Darrel accepted the offer of a glass of brandy as he would have hot coffee.

This pleased the pirate captain, and never niggardly in profanity, he now poured forth oaths and curses of all nations, in a manner which must have won the admiration of his guardian angel.

After consigning his soul to perdition, and expressing the hope that his eyesight might be impaired beyond cure if he had ever seen a better sailor than Darrel, Captain Andre continued:

"Keelhaul my soul, if I don't make ye first officer when we fit out at Carthage! We'll ship a hundred men, and go privateering, if that suits ye."

Janvrin, coming down the companionway at the moment, heard what was said, and having noticed the captain's admiration of Darrel's work during the day, guessed what had gone before.

He also heard the middy's reply:

"But, captain, I haven't said I'd join you, and, even if I had, I would never rob your first officer of his berth."

"Bah!" snorted the captain, contemptuously. "You'll change your mind before we leave Carthage."

And then going off on another tack—for he now felt sure of Darrel—the pirate began a glowing description of the place, and the delightful time they would have there, with:

"We'll have a glorious time! I've got lots of money, and you shall help to spend some of it while we're refitting."

Meanwhile, Janvrin had stolen back on deck to reflect on what he had heard, and finally came to the conclusion that the captain was right.

"He will—he must change his mind," muttered Janvrin, as he paced the deck full of jealous anger, and then came the recollection of the middy's prompt refusal to oust him.

"I must help him to get away—but how?" was Janvrin's next thought, and he pondered long and deeply over the means to be adopted, and the likelihood of his part in Darrel's escape being discovered.

If it was, he knew what his fate would be.

The captain, meantime, was continuing his description of the delights of life in Carthage, and gradually drinking himself drunk, but before falling asleep, he took from a secret locker a pair of silver-mounted pistols, and a beautiful, jewel-mounted sword, which he handed to Darrel.

"Here, take these," he said, sleepily. "Even if you ain't joined, you will, but I'm sleepy, and you must stand a watch for me."

It was nearly eight bells (12 o'clock) when Darrel came on deck to relieve Janvrin. The gale had subsided to a gentle breeze, and the moon was shining brightly.

"So you've decided to join!" sneered Janvrin, seeing the arms.

"I have not, and never shall, be the consequences what they may!"

"Good! Now how would you like a chance to get away?"

"Show me the chance, if you mean that? I'll take it."

By way of reply, Janvrin took Darrel by the

arm, and pointing over the taffrail, whispered:

"There lies the gig with oars, mast and sail, provisioned for ten days. You can step your mast and bend on your sail after you've rowed a little distance. There's your chance. If you want it, take it, and I'll see that no one interferes."

Ten minutes later, Darrel Dare had hoisted a lug sail, and was speeding over the bosom of the Caribbean Sea, headed for Jamaica, and three hundred miles from where he had last seen the frigate.

CHAPTER XV.

BACK TO THE "UNITED STATES"—GRACE DISAPPEARS.

THE United States had been pretty badly cut up in rigging and sails, and the privateer being in even worse condition, Captain Stewart decided to return to Kingston for repairs.

Some temporary repairs were made and then, with Ballard in command of the prize, the vessels proceeded under easy sail, keeping well off the coast.

On the morning of the third day, Reeves, who had been aloft with his glass, came partly down the main rigging to announce:

"A small boat about three miles to the windward!"

"Anybody in it?" asked Allen.

"Can't say, sir. Lug sail set, and seems drifting," replied Reeves, mounting the rigging.

"Ahoy, the deck!" cried Reeves, almost as soon as he had gained the mast-head. "There's some one in uniform in the stern sheets!"

The lug-sail of the small boat shifted a minute after, and it now bore straight toward the frigate.

"Better lower a boat, and if she shifts again, go after her," suggested Reeves.

"Do so!" said Allen, at the same time giving orders to heave to.

This brought Captain Stewart on deck, and he, too, became deeply interested in the small boat, which was now within two miles of the frigate.

"Lower away! Lively, lads—she's shifted again!" cried Lieutenant Allen a few minutes after the captain came up, and away shot the quarter-boat in command of Reeves.

The sail-boat was soon overtaken, and then the watchers on the frigate and corvette, (which was also lying hove to) were surprised to see the middy waving his cap around his head.

What the deuce is the matter with the lad?" exclaimed the captain.

"Looks as though he felt happy over something," returned Allen.

The mast of the sail-boat was unstepped, and two of the crew rowed it after the other boat, both quickly reaching the side of the frigate, where many curious eyes awaited their coming.

"It's Dare! It's Darrel!" was the cry, and, as the reader has long ago surmised, it was.

The gig had, indeed, been provisioned for ten days, but with food only, and for three days Darrel had not had a drop of water.

Meat, salt junk, there was in plenty, but he did not dare touch it, and even the dry, hard, ship's bread created such a thirst, that after the first day he refrained from that.

Fortunately, two oranges were among the things placed in the boat, and, upon the juice of these Darrel had managed to keep up until the previous night, when, from the intense heat and exhaustion he became unconscious.

"What's that in his hand?" asked the captain, when Darrel was placed under an awning.

"A piece of dried-up orange, sir. Poor boy! God only knows how long he's lived on that!" replied the surgeon.

"Phew!" whistled the captain. "Look at the pistols—and that sword!"

Much speculation had been excited by these weapons, and when Darrel became conscious, the captain's first words to him were regarding them.

"So, my lad," he said, with a smile, "you've been after another sword?"

"Too weak to speak, Darrel answered with a faint smile.

"From the pirate, are they not? You were a prisoner and escaped?" continued the commander.

The gig bore the name of the pirate schooner, and the captain guessed the rest.

"He must not attempt to talk," said the surgeon, and the captain had to curb his impatience regarding the present whereabouts of The Hawk.

During the afternoon, Darrel related to the

captain the story of the escape of the schooner and his escape from her.

"Carthage, eh?" mused the captain; "well, we must give 'em a call."

"And this happened before midnight?" he continued, recurring to Darrel's story.

"It had just struck seven bells, sir."

Turning to Ballard, who had come aboard to see Darrel, Captain Stewart said sharply:

"Find out who had charge of the deck!"

"Mr. Grace, sir!" replied Ballard, returning from the log-book.

"Call Grace!"

Grace came aft—he had kept forward ever since Darrel was brought aboard.

"Mr. Grace, you asserted that the prize was alongside during your entire watch while lying at Kingston. Now Mr. Darrel tells us the ship slipped her cable before eight bells."

Looking the captain straight in the face, Grace replied:

"Mr. Darrel must be mistaken. The prize was there during my entire watch."

"We were found ashore, sir, at midnight."

Every one turned on hearing this, and saw Donald, the boatswain.

"Correct, as far as we know, Donald!" exclaimed Captain Stewart, and turning to Grace:

"You will consider yourself under arrest until we ascertain more about this at Kingston."

With a cowl at the boatswain, Grace saluted, and turning away, went below to the wardroom.

Kingston was made that night, but next morning Midshipman Grace was not to be found—nor was the gig of The Hawk.

CHAPTER XVI.

ORDERED HOME.

GRACE'S disappearance with the gig was sufficient for Captain Stewart.

"The scoundrel was in league with the pirates. He drugged our men and then released them," he said, and then ordered his gig to go ashore to capture the missing midshipman.

But the captain's efforts, opposed to Andre's gold and Andre's influence, were powerless to find Grace, and when the corvette and frigate were both refitted, he was compelled to sail without having found him.

During the two weeks spent in getting the corvette and frigate in good shape, Captain Stewart had managed to obtain a number of men—one large lot of fifty being from a French privateer, who, not caring to be bothered with prisoners, had landed them at Kingston.

Captain Stewart had now sufficient men for both vessels, and was at first inclined to sail for Carthage, but finally decided to cruise around the Black Republic before doing so.

"We will put in at Port au Prince, if we don't find anything," he said to Ballard, "and from there we'll make for Carthage."

Darrel Dare, now fully recovered, was put aboard the corvette as Ballard's first officer, with Donald, the boatswain, acting as second officer.

It should have been mentioned before that the third officer of the United States, Mr. Seaver, had been ill ever since leaving New York.

He had been wounded on the previous voyage, but insisted on joining his ship when she sailed, and although full of pluck, was only in the way ever since, his wound having broken out afresh.

The voyage to Port au Prince was uneventful, but on reaching there Captain Stewart was very much put out to receive orders to return home, and there was, of course, nothing to do but obey.

"Lunkheads!" was all he said, and then gave orders to get under way.

Both vessels were in excellent condition, and being built for speed, the voyage home was quick and uneventful.

Reaching New York, Captain Stewart was surprised to find that it was through kindness he had been summoned home.

Mrs. Stewart, the captain's mother, was at the point of death, and after sending a message to Captain King, he hastened to the home in Philadelphia where he had been born only twenty-nine years previous, for Captain Stewart was then the youngest of his rank in the American Navy.

Captain Stewart's messenger to Captain King was Midshipman Darrel Dare, and the message was a very lengthy one.

Darrel presented himself at the King home—stead in his very neatest uniform, wearing the jeweled sword and silver-mounted pistols, but

with a heart beating so loudly that he felt sure it was that, and not his really fine appearance, which caused people to stare at him.

Emily King answered his rather timid rap of the big knocker, and the delighted "Oh, Mr. Darrel!" with which she greeted him, even before extending both her hands, set the middy's already fluttering heart going worse than ever. "Come in! come in!" she cried, dragging him into the parlor.

"Now tell me where you've been, and what you've been doing!" was the next order of the imperious little beauty.

Now Darrel Dare was just the kind of a fellow to recite all about other people's doings, but when it came to detailing *his own*—!

But Darrel was saved all further present trouble by the entrance of Captain King, who was delighted to see him and to whom the middy delivered Captain Stewart's letter.

Leaving Emily to care for Darrel, until his wife came, Captain King retired to the library to peruse his friend's epistle.

He had hardly left the room before Mrs. King entered and greeted Darrel very kindly, asking in a general way regarding his experience, and particularly regarding Captain Stewart.

In answering Mrs. King's questions, Darrel was unwittingly in a fair way of making a hero of himself, when the captain entered and saved him the trouble.

Going up to Darrel, he took him by both hands and shaking them heartily, said:

"My dear boy, you've certainly won your shoulder-straps! Let me see your sword and pistols—those you got from the pirate!"

Blushing till the blood showed red through the bronze, Darrel exhibited the weapons, which excited great admiration.

"Shall you go to see your uncle, Mr. Darrel?" asked Mrs. King.

"Oh, I forgot! My dear, Mr. Darrel is no longer Mr. Darrel, but Mr. Dare. Let me read you Charley's letter," and Captain King read a detailed account of Darrel's services and experience.

This, if possible, made the young midshipman more interesting than ever.

"But I should call on him," advised Captain King, "and try to find out what he really knows about you. I will accompany you if you wish—but to-morrow will be time enough for that. You, of course, will remain with us while ashore."

It was like another paradise for Darrel, and the day and evening passed like a dream—most of the former being spent outdoors in the company of Emily King, and the latter in the parlor, where Darrel was skillfully drawn out by the captain, and without being at all aware of it, proved what a really brave fellow he was.

Next morning Captain King and Darrel were rowed over to Flushing by two of the former's negroes, but as in all other matters connected with his name, Darrel was doomed to disappointment.

CHAPTER XVII.

PLEASANT DAYS—PROMOTED.

THE trip to Flushing was fruitless—Jabez Smith, Darrel's reputed uncle, laughed at the story of the pirate, and when Darrel asked to see Mrs. Smith, ordered him to "clear out!"

"Don't come here with yer cock-and-bull stories about pirates! Ye've gone and ye must stay—so, clear out!" were Smith's final words as he entered the house, barring the door after him.

"Don't feel downcast, Darrel!" said Captain King, as they returned to the boat. "That fellow knows something, and so does his wife. The fact that he would neither tell you anything himself, nor let you speak to her, proves that to my satisfaction."

"But what good is that to me?" asked Darrel. "He will never tell me—nor allow her to do so, if he can prevent her."

"Precisely—if he can prevent her! I will send a smart fellow over here to watch him, and the first time he goes off in his boat you can come over and talk to her."

Darrel shook his head doubtfully, but brightened up a little.

Had he witnessed the scene that followed Smith's entrance of the house, he would have remained downcast.

"That brat's come back!" he exclaimed, after barring the door.

"Darrel?—Ben, I mean!" said Mrs. Smith, her face lighting up with pleasure.

"Why—who else would it be? Have you been dealing in others?" sneered her husband.

"I should like to see him," faltered Mrs. Smith.

"Would you? Well—you listen to this: We won't be here long, but if he comes around here while I'm away, keep him out! If you let him in or speak to him, I'll brain ye! I'm goin' away to-night, but you'll be watched."

Meantime, Captain King and Darrel had reached the boat and set out for New York, the former driving all thoughts of Smith out of his companion's head by informing him that he had been recommended for promotion, and so strongly that he was certain of gaining his step.

Arriving home in due course, and having explained their disappointment, Captain King went down-town to find the man who was to watch Smith, leaving Darrel to the care of the ladies.

Emily King was not only pretty but wealthy, and though the numerous callers at the King homestead came ostensibly to visit the mistress of the house, many anxious, envious glances and thoughts were bestowed upon the handsome young midshipman, who was treated so kindly by both Mrs. King and Emily.

To Darrel it seemed like a dream of happiness, from which there must be a cruel awakening, but he was happily disappointed.

"Captain Stewart!" was the announcement, one evening two weeks after Darrel's arrival at the King homestead.

Mrs. Stewart was now on the fair road to recovery, and he had taken the first opportunity of visiting his friends.

"And I believe I've good news for you two gentlemen," said Captain Stewart, after a few minutes' conversation.

"You, Harry," he continued, "are appointed to the command of the corvette we captured—she's now the 'Rattlesnake'—and you, Mr. Dare, will be her third officer."

Both the newly-appointed officers were delighted, but neither Mrs. King nor Emily appeared to show their joy, and Darrel's countenance, too, soon began to look a little troubled.

"What's wrong?" asked Captain Stewart, his sharp eyes detecting the change.

"I hope I will not be thought ungrateful," replied Darrel, "but I would rather have remained a midshipman on board the United States."

There was a general smile over Darrel's way of saying he wished to remain with Captain Stewart, and the latter said:

"Never mind, lieutenant, we shall be close together," and turning to Captain King:

"We sail together for the West Indies in a week."

The last piece of information drew attention from Darrel's blushes at being addressed by his newly-acquired title.

"By Jove, I'm glad!" exclaimed Captain King.

"Harry!" said Mrs. King, reproachfully.

"Well, now, don't blame me, Nellie. I'm a sailor, but if I was left in the dry-dock much longer, I'd get so rusty that I wouldn't know the foretopsail from the mainyard!"

But this failed to satisfy Mrs. King, and she looked troubled for the balance of the evening—both ladies retiring early.

The proposed trip was discussed by the gentlemen until a late hour, Darrel being included in the conversation, although he was a better listener than a talker.

During the week preceding their sailing, Darrel was kept busily engaged in assisting to prepare the Rattlesnake for sea, and nothing was seen of him at the King homestead until the day prior to her departure.

When he called, Darrel found Mrs. King and Mrs. Macomber, the wife of the first officer of the Rattlesnake, seated at the entrance to the garden back of the house, while Emily, with a number of young ladies and gentlemen, were at the farther end.

Up to the time of his entrance Emily was quiet and thoughtful, but, after giving Darrel a cool welcome and introducing him to the others, she became very merry, and flirted most outrageously.

Darrel stood the unexpected neglect for a short time, and then sought the company of the married ladies, but they were exchanging consolations, and he bade them good by, leaving with the feeling that he was mistaken regarding the interest taken in him by the King family.

Scarcely had he gone when Emily—pleading headache—retired to her room, and when she appeared for supper her eyelids were very red and her cheeks very pale.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT SEA—A DOUBLE VICTORY—GRACE.

THERE were a great many visitors to the ships on the morning of sailing, and Darrel, standing

at the gangway to look after those who came aboard, felt sad and lonely as he watched them.

Every man on board—every man except Darrel Dare, had some relative, some friend, to bid him good-by and wish him good luck.

Presently he saw Captain King approaching with a large party, and resolved to be carefully polite—nothing more.

"For it is plain they consider me beneath them," thought Darrel.

But his heart warmed a little, and he thanked Mrs. King with a grateful smile, when she stopped to say she wished him a safe return.

"And I'm sure it will be with distinction!" she added, as she turned away.

Emily bowed as she passed and he saw no more of her until the visitors were leaving. She was almost the last to go and, holding out her hand, said:

"I pray no harm may befall you, and—and—I'm very sorry!"—and then she was gone.

It was rather enigmatical, but Darrel thought he understood it. Perhaps the tears in her eyes and her tremulous voice gave him a clew to her meaning—although parting with her brother might cause both.

The voyage down to Port au Prince—the first port they stopped at—was a rapid one, the weather being fine and the winds favorable.

The second officer of the corvette was a Mr. Rawson, a fine seaman, and one to whom Darrel took a strong liking.

His most pleasant surprise after getting under way, had been to find that the old boatswain of the frigate, Donald Fraser, was on board the Rattlesnake.

These two had become great friends, and during the cruise Donald told Darrel that on the night he fell overboard the foot-rope had been cut.

"I looked at it next mornin'," said Donald, "and I found it fresh cut—and the nearest one t'ye was that imp, Grace!"

Leaving Port au Prince, the two vessels cruised across the Caribbean to Carthage, and on nearing there, work commenced in earnest.

Captain Stewart had changed his mind, and was about to bear off toward the Mosquito Coast because of information received from a neutral, when two vessels were discovered coming from toward Carthage.

Both strangers were under full sail, and evidently in company.

"What d'ye make of them, Mr. Dare?" asked Captain King, as Darrel descended from aloft where he had been viewing the strangers through his glass.

The one to windward is a schooner, and if I'm not greatly mistaken, it's The Hawk—the one that slipped away from us at Kingston. The other is about our own style—French," replied Darrel.

"D'ye think they will be fools enough to bear down on us?"

"Not after a good look at the frigate. The captain of the schooner knows her too well for that."

"Clear the decks! Beat to quarters!" ordered Captain King, adding:

"We may as well be ready for the chance if it's offered us."

When a mile distant, the privateers reduced sail and rounded to on the same tack as the corvette and frigate.

"The other's a corvette, sir, like ourselves," said Darrel, "but she carries twenty-eight guns. There go the colors—French!"

"It must be Moreau's ship—The Lily," remarked Captain King, examining her through his glass.

"Yes, it certainly is," he continued, "and he's a hard fighter."

"The frigate is signaling to let him take care of the corvette," said the first officer.

"It would appear to be their wish, also," replied the captain, indicating the privateer edging up to them—The Hawk appearing to select the Rattlesnake, and The Lily bending toward the United States.

As The Hawk drew near, the Rattlesnake hove to. This was barely done, before the courses of the enemy fluttered in the breeze, then her canvas filled, and, when she had gathered sufficient headway, hove in stays, crossing on the opposite tack.

Standing on this tack until well abaft the beam, The Hawk wore round and ranged up on the weather quarter of the Rattlesnake, but the third officer of the American had been through that game once before, and filled his mainsail to be in readiness for the next move.

"I'll take the helm, sir, if you please," announced Darrel; "I know his game."

"Very good, Darrel. Win all the glory you can. Bright eyes at home will shine all the brighter for it," Captain King remarked, encouragingly.

Flushed and pleased, the third officer went to the wheel, and as *The Hawk* put her helm up and paid off to pass under the stern of the corvette, intending to rake her, Darrel put his helm hard down!

"Let fly your jib-sheets and check head-braces," he shouted. "Quick now, and to your guns!"

It was the same old maneuver, with the same result of forcing *The Hawk* to exchange broadsides, but the consequence of this was much more disastrous to the schooner than to the corvette, owing to the heavier metal carried by the latter.

The low decks of the schooner caused her to suffer most in the rigging and lower spars, and especially in the large crew crowding her deck, while the principal damage suffered by the corvette was to her hull.

"Good, Darrel! Well done!" cried Captain King, as *The Hawk* drew off, staggered by the result of her maneuver; but she attempted the same move in a few minutes by throwing herself up in the wind as she ranged up after tacking.

Watching every movement of the schooner, Darrel edged away until the proper moment arrived, and then, suddenly throwing his helm up, managed to force a second exchange of broadsides.

As in the former instance, the schooner was much the greater sufferer by the failure of the attempt which she made to rake the corvette—depending on her superiority in speed and ease in handling to avoid an exchange.

The Hawk now drew off, and, running ahead on the wind, it looked as if she was trying to escape, leaving her consort to her fate: but Captain King did not intend to let her off so easy, and set sail after her.

The corvette was a fleet runner, being built especially for speed; but so was the schooner, and, favored by the light breeze then blowing, it looked as if she would get away.

"That fellow will show us a clean pair of heels if we don't bring him to!" exclaimed Captain King, after watching the chase a few minutes.

"His mainmast is badly splintered; why not try the bow-chaser on it?" suggested Darrel.

The suggestion was instantly adopted and the gun carefully trained on the privateer, which now was half a mile dead ahead.

Boom! went the big forward gun, and a cheer arose from the corvette as the mainmast of *The Hawk* was seen to totter and fall over the side!

Before the wreckage could be cleared away the corvette had borne down on the schooner, and, rounding-to, crossed her stern, delivering a raking broadside that seemed to carry everything before it.

Rigging, spars, men and guns went down like grain before the sickle before that terrible rain of iron.

"Ready, there, with your boarders, Macomber! All hands for boarding!" shouted Captain King.

The corvette was brought round and run alongside the schooner, while the men were snatching cutlasses from the capstan into which they were inserted.

"Boarders! Boarders away!" roared the captain, as the *Rattlesnake* grappled *The Hawk*.

As soon as the corvette was brought alongside the schooner Darrel gave up the helm and joined the boarders, and, being the first to spring on the privateer's deck, he found himself face to face with Captain Andre!

The general conflict was a bitter one. The privateersmen, under Andre's encouraging tones, fought like demons, and, notwithstanding the demoralization caused by the *Rattlesnake's* raking fire, the issue was still in doubt when Andre, with a cry of agony, made a rush toward the fore-castle, causing his men to lose heart.

Darrel had boarded *The Hawk* aft, but some one came between him and Andre before they could exchange blows, and while fighting, he several times heard a familiar voice forward, encouraging the crew of the privateer.

At length the voice grew so familiar that Darrel determined to have a look at the owner of it, and accompanied by Donald, fought his way toward the fore-castle.

For a moment the point of the jewel-hilted sword was dropped in surprise.

At the head of more than half of the crew of *The Hawk* was Matthew Grace, ex-U. S. midshipman!

"I thought so! Forward, lads—give it to them!" cried Donald, and thus reminded of his duty, Darrel sprung to lead the charge.

Hewing the way before them, Darrel and Donald at length stood before Grace, who, after one glance at the uniform of the young lieutenant, crossed swords with him.

"Your last stolen sword!" snarled Grace, who was by far the better swordsman.

The decks were reeking with blood, and as he uttered the words, making a lunge at Darrel, the ex-midshipman slipped and fell to the deck.

It was this that caused Andre's rush forward, and he came like a lion, cutting down all who opposed him, crying:

"Matthew, my son! Matthew! I'm coming!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HAWK CAPTURED—GRACE A PRISONER.

THE sudden flight of their captain created a panic among the privateersmen aft, and Captain King's boarders had little difficulty in driving them below, or cutting them down.

Forward, Captain Andre's appearance and words harmed him almost as much—the crew of the schooner believed he had suddenly become insane.

Darrel stood nearest Grace, and as Captain Andre stood over the prostrate youth, his eye fell upon the young lieutenant.

"Ha! 'Twas you!" he yelled, springing at Darrel, who warded off the thrust.

Whatever chance Darrel had with Grace, he had none with Andre, who was an expert swordsman, but he managed to defend himself for a few minutes.

Then a sudden rush of the corvette's crew carried Darrel forward. His sword was extended, while that of Andre was raised to strike, but it did no harm, for Darrel's sword went clear through his antagonist's body.

As Andre fell, Grace sprung up, only to be stricken down by a blow from the flat of Donald's cutlass, and with the fall of the two leaders the fight was over.

As soon as Grace recovered consciousness, he was taken aboard the *Rattlesnake*, but Andre was dying and it was deemed useless to remove him.

Captain King and Darrel went to the dying man, and the latter said:

"Captain Andre, you know, or pretended to know, something concerning me. Do you?"

Andre's face had lost its hard, reckless expression during the last few minutes—the last of his wild and blood-stained career.

"I do," he replied in feeble tones. "You are a much-wronged lad, but now that my son is dead I will right you. I tried to get your fortune for him, but somehow it didn't go right—and now I'm dying and he's dead. It's all wrong—all wrong."

Andre's mind was beginning to wander; but with an effort he seemed to pull himself together, and said:

"You must go to Boston—you are Darrel—Dare!"

And that was all. Just as Varney died with the name on his lips, so did Captain Andre.

Both Captain King and Darrel felt disappointed, but the former endeavored to find comfort in Grace's capture.

"He (Grace) undoubtedly knows all about it," said the captain, "and I guess we can make him tell what he knows."

But Captain King was mistaken. Grace laughed at the idea of being the person referred to by Andre as his son, and as to the rest preserved silence.

Captain Stewart had disposed of his adversary about the same time as Captain King did his, but *The Lily* made a desperate fight, and the engagement having been closer from the beginning, the damage was greater than that sustained by either of the other vessels.

"The *Lily* was in a sinking condition, while every part of the United States proved the severe and well-directed fire of her antagonist, her rigging being cut away fore and aft, her bulwarks smashed in several places, her masts pitted with shot and her sails as ragged as Jeremy Diddler's pocket handkerchief.

"Our hull did not suffer very much but I'm afraid our ship's company will muster rather thin," said Captain Stewart on coming aboard the corvette.

"We have taken an interesting prisoner," returned Captain King, "your late midshipman, Grace, is confined—in rather close quarters I fear—in the forehold."

Captain King then proceeded to relate the circumstances attending the capture of *The*

Hawk and the death of Captain Andre, dilating on Darrel's part in the fight, and his skillful handling of the *Rattlesnake*.

"He really did more to win the fight, than the whole of us put together!" said the big-hearted captain, giving praise where another would reserve it for himself.

"He is a fine fellow—fine fellow!" said Stewart absently, and then as Darrel passed, roused himself.

"Mr. Dare!" he called, and as Darrel drew near continued:

"In the name of the United States Government, and of Captain King and myself, I thank you for the skill and courage you have to-day exhibited in assisting to uphold the credit of the American Navy!"

A hearty cheer arose from the crew of the corvette, who, attracted by the loud tones of the speaker, and taking advantage of the license immediately following an engagement, had gathered round behind their favorite officer.

The latter had been wounded twice during the action, and with his arm in a sling stood facing his superior officers, looking somewhat confused at the thundering compliment he had received.

"And you, too, my lads!" continued the captain, "you, too, deserve the thanks of your countrymen, and" (with a sly look at Captain King) "I've no doubt your captain will see that you receive an immediate token of it from the steward and bo'sun!"

Another ringing cheer greeted this little speech, the more hearty because of its significant termination, which meant grog immediately, and plum duff in the near future.

As Captain Stewart entered his gig he said to Darrel:

"Come aboard the frigate as early as possible this evening, Mr. Dare."

CHAPTER XX.

GRACE MAKES AN EXPLANATION.

ALL three vessels required repairing which demanded immediate attention, and necessitated remaining where they were, so that the weather being fine and clear there was little for Darrel to do, and he was aboard the frigate in advance of his captain.

Captain Stewart's countenance wore a puzzled, thoughtful expression, all day after his return from the *Rattlesnake*, and as the day lengthened he grew more thoughtful.

He was standing on the quarter-deck when Darrel arrived, and welcomed him most cordially.

"Darrel," he said, when they were seated in the cabin, "Darrel, have you any recollection of places or people, other than this pretended uncle—Smith? I mean, of course, in your childhood."

"Oh, yes!" replied Darrel, promptly. "But not enough to identify places or names. Mrs. Smith has told me, however, that I was born in Boston, and lived there until my parents died. How true that is I cannot say, for she was and is completely under his influence."

Captain King arrived on board at this juncture, and on his joining them Darrel repeated what he had told Captain Stewart.

The commander of the *Rattlesnake* was well acquainted in Boston and had been married there.

"Why, hang it all!" he exclaimed. "This bears out Andre's words: 'Go to Boston.'"

"I have thought of that, and been trying to think how Darrel could be sent home with *The Hawk*. He could then go on to Boston, and make inquiries for people whose surnames begin with Dare, for I am convinced there's something more than a mere coincidence in these two men knowing him."

Captain Stewart had formed a strong attachment—more than a mere fancy, from the beginning, for the young lieutenant, and spoke earnestly.

"I agree with you there," said Captain King, "and, moreover, Darrel must bear a striking resemblance to some one or they would not have recognized him so easily."

"Very true, and that would be of great assistance to him," returned the other, and turning to Darrel, who sat between the two, he said, reflectively:

"I wish it were possible to send you home! Your wound would be sufficient excuse to give you command of the prize, but where are the men to form a crew? We are short-handed, as it is, for the work we have to do at Carthage."

Darrel was much affected by the captain's interest in him, and replied warmly:

"I am deeply grateful, sir, for your kind-

ness, and the interest you take in me. But, captain, while I should like to find my relatives, if I really have any, it seems extremely doubtful if my search would be successful. I have in a short time, thanks to your kindness, and yours, sir (bowing to Captain King), risen far beyond my hopes or merits in a profession which I love, and I hope you will not bother yourself about finding a way of sending me home with the prize."

Darrel paused a moment after this long speech—the longest he had ever been known to make, and added gratefully:

"I am sure you've already done enough for me, without further bother."

The two friends exchanged glances, and Captain Stewart said:

"Very well, Darrel; we'll say no more about it until we're through with Carthage."

Next morning, while repairs were still going on, Grace was brought before Captain Stewart.

The ex-midshipman was a relative of an old friend of the captain, and when he was called back to New York, Captain Stewart could not bring himself to inform Judge Tudor of Grace's disgrace.

Even now it was more in sorrow than anger that he asked:

"Well, sir! What have you got to say for yourself?"

Grace was quite cool and unabashed by those looking on and listening.

"I suppose," he replied, "that appearances are even more against me now than when we were in Kingston Harbor, and although then I would have been entitled to a court-martial, and yet feared to trust to it, while now I am not, still I believe I can give you an explanation which will cause you to grant me one. For, except that I had not his luck to escape, I am no more guilty than Darrel was."

He paused, and then, while the captain gazed at him in amazement, and the other officers exchanged wondering, incredulous glances, continued:

"I received a severe fall yesterday, and, as you can easily ascertain, neither food nor drink have passed my lips since. My head aches frightfully and I am weak and faint—may I sit in the cabin and tell you how I came to be on the privateer?"

Partly suspecting that Grace wished to be away from the others, Captain Stewart signed to him to go below, which he did in a weak, hesitating way.

"Why, he was caught red-handed!" exclaimed one of the officers.

"And is fit only to decorate a yard-arm!" chimed in another.

But when the captain returned to the deck, Grace remaining in the cabin, it was to send for the surgeon.

"Mr. Parkes," he said when that gentleman arrived, "Mr. Grace is below in the cabin and needs your attention. He is simply under arrest awaiting trial, for he has explained his presence on The Hawk clearly enough, I think, to grant him a court-martial!"

CHAPTER XXI.

PICKED UP AT SEA—COMMANDER DARREL.

MR. PARKES, and those within hearing, looked amazed, but Captain Stewart was known to be a strict, just man, and when Grace came on deck, after the surgeon was through with him, there was much less suspicion and dislike in the looks cast upon him, as he passed to the ward-room, than might have been expected.

There might be something, you know, in the story he told the captain.

An hour after Grace's interview with the captain, two open boats were discovered on the weather bow, bearing toward the frigate and her consort.

There was much speculation over the boats, which, as they came closer, were seen to contain twenty-odd men and two women.

"A shipwrecked crew sure enough," observed Reeves, "but hang it! we've had no bad weather lately."

"Very true," said Allen, "but folks don't usually get into open boats three hundred miles at sea for pleasure."

The boats were soon alongside the frigate, and then it was found that they contained the owner and his wife and daughter, and part of the crew of an English merchantman, which had been sunk three days previous.

Notwithstanding they were neutral—and privateers always respect neutrals—they had been attacked by a French privateer.

"She was a schooner, while the Queen was a full-rigged ship," said Mr. Simpson, the owner of the latter vessel, in telling his story, "and

for a merchant ship we were pretty well manned and armed. Most of the crew, and all of our officers, were man-o'-war's-men, and we succeeded, after a hard fight, in driving her off, but owing to her superior guns she left us in a sinking condition, and we were compelled to take to the boats."

"And that 'ere vessel, sir, is the werry one as tried to board us," observed the boatswain of the Queen, indicating The Hawk.

Mr. Simpson looked somewhat alarmed, thinking for a moment that he had, so to speak, walked into a nest of pirates, but Captain Stewart's smile reassured him.

"We captured her and sunk another yesterday, and are now fixing up to clean out their nest at Carthage."

Mrs. Simpson and her daughter were made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, and for the first time in his career, while at sea, two ladies graced the captain's table that day at dinner.

"Captain, will there be any chance of putting us on another vessel before you go to fight those horrid pirates?" asked Mrs. Simpson, who had been informed of his intention to proceed to Carthage.

"I think, madam, I have a better plan than that," replied the captain, and turning to Mr. Simpson, said:

"If it were not that I am already short-handed, I would send you to New York in the schooner. Now your men have served on a man-o'-war, you tell me, and if you could get some of them to volunteer, there would be no trouble about manning the schooner."

Mr. Simpson thought there would be no difficulty in getting the men to volunteer, and he was right, for on hearing that it was privateers and pirates they would have to fight, the British seamen were even eager to join the ship's company.

During the afternoon, Grace came on deck, and on seeing the merchant sailors asked one of the crew where they came from. On being informed, he immediately returned to the ward-room, although, owing to his illness, he was allowed full liberty to do as he pleased.

Although but a few minutes on deck, Mr. Simpson had seen Grace, and approaching the seaman to whom the latter had spoken, asked who he was.

"Midshipman Grace, sir—under arrest," was the reply.

"Oh—thank you," said Mr. Simpson, as he turned away, looking rather puzzled.

The fact that Grace was an officer under arrest on board his own ship would, of course, appear to preclude the possibility of his having been on board The Hawk.

"And yet I would have sworn he was the leader of the boarding-party," muttered Mr. Simpson.

Every attention was now given to pushing the work on The Hawk, and during the evening Darrel was called aboard the frigate and informed that as soon as the repairs were complete he would sail in command of her for New York.

To hear was, of course, to obey; but Darrel looked anything but pleased with the honor bestowed upon him.

"Don't be too greedy, my lad," said Captain Stewart, observing this. "You've already won distinction enough, and the report you will bear will certainly not disgrace you. Come, I must introduce you to your passengers."

And Captain Stewart took Darrel to the cabin and made him acquainted with the Simpson family, of whom Mrs. Simpson appeared to be particularly impressed by his appearance.

"He has been wounded," said Mr. Simpson, when the lieutenant had returned to his ship.

"Wounded!" echoed the captain. "I should say he had! He's been twice captured by pirates, twice in positions where another would have been drowned, twice wounded in the last engagement, and is the bravest officer, and, for his age, the most skillful seaman in the service!"

After hearing this, it is not to be wondered that the Simpson family set sail the following day, with Commander Darrel and a crew of twenty picked men, with the most perfect confidence mixed with not a little worship.

CHAPTER XXII.

COMMANDER DARREL MAKES A CAPTURE.

DARREL had been allowed to pick his men for the prize-crew, and among those he put on the list were his friends, Reeves and Donald Fraser.

Jack Reeves had contracted malaria while in Kingston, and Darrel knew the midshipman

would be glad of an honorable opportunity to return home, while the boatswain was the best seaman he could have selected.

On the evening of the third day after parting company with Captain Stewart, Darrel, with the Simpsons and Reeves, was sitting on the quarter-deck relating his experience aboard The Dove, and had just reached the point where he was told his name was not Ben Darrel, when Donald came to report a strange sail bearing down on the weather beam—and strangers in those waters were always suspicious.

Mrs. Simpson, who looked intensely interested and somewhat excited, paid no attention to the nature of the interruption.

In introducing him, Captain Stewart had unconsciously used the familiar name—Darrel—and, from force of habit, both Reeves and Donald did the same.

The topic had been introduced by Reeves, and Darrel, who disliked himself or his affairs as a subject of conversation, was glad of the opportunity to get away from it.

Therefore, when Mrs. Simpson would have asked:

"What did he say it was?" Darrel interrupted:

"Beg pardon, madam! I must see to this—we are not safe yet."

"She's coming up fast, sir," announced Donald, as Darrel approached. "Shall I crowd on sail?"

The Hawk had been moving along under easy canvas, and the stranger was gaining on her rapidly.

"She's a ten-gun brig, shows no colors, and looks decidedly suspicious," called out Reeves, who had sprung into the rigging with his glass, at the first intimation of danger.

"Well—yes, Donald, crowd on all we can carry. We can't afford to fight with the ladies aboard. You had better conduct them below, Reeves."

"I hate to run from her," continued Darrel, "but we can't afford to risk a fight under the circumstances, and such a small number of men."

Even cautious Donald was averse to the idea of running away, and so slow was he in issuing orders that the brig was only a half-mile astern when The Hawk began to hold her own.

"Come, come, Donald!" expostulated Darrel, with a smile at the boatswain's trick to provoke a fight; "shake out all that reefing—you know we can carry every inch of canvas in this breeze."

Donald obeyed, looking rather sheepish at being caught, and the schooner began to draw away from her pursuer—all doubts as to the character of the brig being set at rest a few moments later, when she ran up the tri-color and dropped a shot just astern of The Hawk.

"Doesn't want to spoil our beauty," remarked Reeves, "but we've got the heels of him, and he's got to do it if he wants to get within hailing distance."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when another shot came booming over the water, and an instant later there was a crash above, followed by the fall of the maintopmast.

"Two can play at that game!" cried Darrel, angrily. "Bring the stern-chaser to bear on him, Reeves! Heave to, Donald! We'll teach this fellow a trick or two."

Darrel's fighting blood was up now, and he would not run if he could.

A dozen men sprung into the rigging and cleared away the fallen topmast, while the schooner hove to, awaiting her pursuer.

Reeves's forte was gunnery, and as he sighted the piece, he breathed a fervent wish that pretty Ellen Simpson could see the effect of the shot.

She would certainly have been pleased at his success, for it was an excellent shot, carrying away the foretopmast of the brig.

Once more the schooner "had the heels" of her pursuer, but when Donald looked inquiringly at Darrel, as much as to say, "We can now give him the slip," the latter simply said:

"Stand ready to fill! Try another shot, Mr. Reeves!"

This shot splintered the brig's foremast, and carried destruction to those gathered round it.

Without waiting for the order, Reeves, as soon as the gun was ready, sighted and fired again. It was a hasty, chance shot, and, as is often the case, proved the most dangerous, or effective—according to your point of view.

"Boiling bilge water! There goes her foremast—see it totter!" cried Donald excitedly, as the report died away, and he was right, for, after swaying a minute or two, the brig's fore-

mast, already badly wounded, fell over sideways.

"That brig's ours, sir, if you say the word," was Donald's dangerous suggestion, and Reeves added strength to it with:

"It would be a big thing for us (he meant you), if we took her into port."

Darrel knew from the character of the brig that she must carry a large crew, but the temptation was great, and he—well, he was only human, so with a nod to Donald, he took his position beside the man at the wheel.

"They'll never be able to broadside us, anyhow," was his consolatory thought, as, like the bird for which she was named, the schooner swept down on her late pursuer.

"Ready there to rake her, Reeves! To your sheets there, lads! Let go—haul! Fire!"

Darrel brought The Hawk across the bows of the brig with the last word, so close that her bowsprit almost touched his rigging, and at this short range the effect of the broadside was terrific.

Knowing it was Darrel's desire to take the brig in as good condition as possible, Reeves had charged every gun with grape-shot, and the slaughter was so great that one broadside proved sufficient.

As the schooner wore round to deliver the second broadside, the captain of the crippled brig, unable to free his ship from the wreckage, and unwilling to uselessly sacrifice his few remaining men, hauled down his colors.

"Heave to, Donald!" ordered Darrel, and with the schooner lying across his bows, the captain of the brig quickly obeyed the order to come aboard The Hawk.

The French captain was an old and experienced sailor, and, when he saw the number of Darrel's crew, he could not refrain from expressing his surprise at the audacity of the latter in returning to attack him.

"Your commander?" he said, unbuckling his sword, and looking around for that personage.

"I am the commander. You may keep your sword," replied Darrel, smiling at the other's astonishment.

The captain bowed, thanked him, buckled on his sword again, and then inquired what were Darrel's orders—all the time preserving the same expression of bewildered astonishment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DARREL AS A "LION."

OUT of a crew of nearly sixty, but twenty of those aboard the brig remained unhurt, and placing Donald with nine others aboard as a prize-crew, Darrel made such temporary repairs as were possible, and set sail for New York.

The jury-mast which was rigged to replace the brig's foremast served its purpose very well, and both vessels made good headway.

The French captain took his capture good-naturedly, and proved himself an entertaining companion—especially to the ladies.

Favored with fair winds and good weather, the remainder of the run to New York was made in a few days, and having first sent Reeves ashore with the Simpsons, Darrel proceeded to transact his official business with the Naval Department, where, after the reading of Captain Stewart's report and his own, the young lieutenant found himself treated with great respect by some, and with admiration by all.

Compliments and invitations were showered upon Darrel by the naval officials, and before night his arrival was the sensation of the day and himself the "lion."

He had been detained in one way or another from calling on Mrs. King until late in the evening, and, when arrived there to deliver Captain King's letter, he found a party in honor of Emily King's sixteenth birthday in progress, and, with a lively recollection of his experience with the garden-party, Darrel determined that his call should be very brief.

The sight of his uniform was sufficient for the colored servant, and he was ushered into the large parlor, where he was received with great surprise and much pleasure by Mrs. King, to whom he at once delivered her husband's letter.

"So you are the gentleman who is causing all the sensation!" she said, conducting him to a seat.

Living so far up-town, Mrs. King had heard only a vague rumor of the arrival of two prize-ships.

"I am only the representative of your husband and Captain Stewart," Darrel replied, evasively, and then, pleading "duty," arose to leave.

"Why, surely, Mr. Dare, you are not going so soon!" exclaimed Mrs. King, but Darrel was wary—he was not to be caught again, and promising to call next day, if possible, left the room.

He had hardly done so, when Mrs. King exclaimed, petulantly, to those standing near:

"Dear me, what's come over him? Just think of it. Here's Lieutenant Dare from my husband's ship—he came in to-day with those two prize-ships—comes here, stays five minutes, and goes off! Of course he brought me this letter, but—"

"God bless me! Lieutenant Dare, did you say? Here, Julius! Julius! Run after that gentleman, and say that Captain Adams wishes to see him for five minutes."

The old gentleman, who thus unceremoniously interrupted Mrs. King, was her husband's uncle, a rough-and-ready old sailor, who would never have been persuaded to attend the gathering but for his liking for Emily.

"I beg your pardon for the interruption," he said, when Julius, the colored servant, had started, "but that young man is a hero, madam, a hero, and I might have missed stays—I mean missed him, if I waited for you to stop."

"He was sent home with the two ships by my husband and Captain Stewart," replied Mrs. King, not at all pleased at the insinuation as to the possible length of her speech.

Here Emily came to her uncle and slipped her arm through his, preparatory to leading him away, but the old gentleman was not through with Mrs. King.

"Lieutenant Dare, madam," he said, calmly, "was sent home with one ship. The other he captured himself, and that, too, with twenty men against sixty! Ah! Here he is—Lieutenant Dare, I am Captain Adams. Let me congratulate you, sir, and at the same time express my admiration of you! I've served under Perry, sir, and got my ship at Lake Champlain, and I can appreciate what you've done!"

To say that Darrel was surprised at this outburst would scarcely be doing justice to his feelings.

He was stunned, overwhelmed, and took Captain Adams's hand in a confused way, while murmuring some words which neither he nor any one else understood.

"Hal! You know Emily, eh?" exclaimed the old gentleman, as Darrel took her extended hand. "Come, we three can have a chat all to ourselves."

Emily's smiling face and bright, laughing eyes had proved too much for Darrel's resolution, and he submitted quietly enough when Captain Adams, taking each by an arm, marched them to a sofa at the further end of the room.

"Now sit between us, Mr. Dare, so that both can hear what you say," commanded Captain Adams.

"But I have nothing to say, sir," laughingly protested Darrel.

Nevertheless, he took the seat.

Mrs. King, like all hostesses, having found that she really possessed a "lion," was not desirous that he should be monopolized, but her efforts to "cut him out" from under the captain's guns were unavailing.

Duty! Darrel was too much engaged with the bright eyes on one side and the rough diamond on the other to think of his excuse until every one was leaving—and then it was too late.

"Dare! Dare!" repeated Captain Adams, reflectively, as they were parting; "any relation to the Dares of— But never mind that now. Emily, I see, is anxious to talk to you. So, good-night."

And when Darrel was returning to the ship he told himself that he had never spent so pleasant an evening in all his life. Not, of course, because *somebody* had been so kind, but then the old gentleman was so jolly and entertaining—and then Darrel remembered the question about the Dares.

Was Captain Adams going to say, "the Dares of Boston?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

SMITH DISAPPEARS—NEWS FROM WASHINGTON.

NEXT morning Darrel received a three-months' furlough, and went, according to promise, to call on the Simpsons, accompanied by Reeves, who was at liberty until the return of the frigate, but they had taken advantage of a fast stage-coach for Boston.

A note to that effect had been left for Darrel by Mr. Simpson, who further stated that he would return the following week.

It was rather early in the day, and hiring a boat, they were taken over to Flushing.

On arriving there, and not seeing Smith's

boat, Darrel hoped to find Mrs. Smith alone, but on reaching the house, if house it could be called, he found to his surprise that it was unoccupied, and from the appearance of the interior, had been so for some time.

Nothing could be learned from the few people living in the vicinity, and Darrel and his friend returned to New York.

It was now near noon, and having promised Captain Adams to "bring his friend" (Reeves), and dine with him, they proceeded to the King homestead, where they received a warm welcome.

Mrs. King, feeling it was not only useful, but necessary, to have a "man about the house," had requested the captain to come and stay with her during her husband's absence, which, after much coaxing, he consented to do.

Reeves straightway proceeded to fall in love with Emily—as was customary whenever he met a pretty girl—and gave her his undivided attention, leaving Darrel to Mrs. King and Captain Adams.

This arrangement suited all except one—Darrel, and possibly another, but the captain insisted on "caring all about the capture of The Hawk, and when this brought Darrel to where his name changed, he said:

"It was at first supposed that Dare was only part of my real name, but the fact that both men stopped at the same place—same syllable—suggests that that is all there is of it."

"Undoubtedly, my dear boy, undoubtedly."

"Well, captain, you were speaking of some Dares you knew—were they of Boston?"

"I don't really know," replied the captain, looking a little puzzled. "I was his first luff. He was a widower, and had one son somewhere, and—"

Captain Adams paused, looking a little startled, and after a keen glance at Darrel, exclaimed:

"Bless my soul! Where have my eyes been?" and grasping Darrel's hand, continued:

"You are certainly Aubrey Dare's son! You've got his eyes, nose and mouth—every feature! Well—well—well. To think I should meet his son after so many years!"

For a few minutes the old man's rough visage softened. His thoughts were away back in the shadowy past, and there was an unusual moisture about his eyes.

Suddenly he looked up, and wringing Darrel's hand, said in a voice full of emotion, and unusually low:

"Ah, my boy, he was a brave man. And how proud he would be of you! Like father like son."

There wasn't a dry eye in the room. The emotion exhibited by the rough old sea-dog touched all. Truly "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

"What became of—of my father?" asked Darrel.

"Killed at Champlain," replied the captain sadly, "I was already stretched out for dead, and it was six months before I knew what had happened him."

"But I'll find out about him!" continued the captain, starting up with sudden energy, "I'll find out! You and I will search together, and the Naval Department's the first port we must make for."

Dinner was now announced, and at the table the old captain kept every one alive with his fun, for with a sudden change of humor, he appeared to be making up for the loss of the father in the finding of the son.

Immediately after dinner, a letter was written and dispatched to the Secretary of the Navy.

"Now we must wait for an answer before doing anything more," said Captain Adams. "Let's take a walk in the garden."

In the garden they found Mrs. King, Emily, Reeves, and many others who had been present the previous night, and knew Lieutenant Dare was to call at the King homestead that day.

Reeves had been lording it bravely until Darrel appeared, but as the latter entered the garden all flocked around him, much to the discomfort of the middy.

He was consoled very quickly by the enforced return of the deserters, who not being able to get a lion were compelled to be content with a cub, for to Mrs. King's great annoyance, Captain Adams and Darrel slipped away as soon as the introductions were over.

Not only that, but Emily—who adored her rough old uncle—disappeared immediately after them.

"That was neatly done," chuckled the captain, as the three strolled along toward the river; "we'll be regularly keelhauled, though, when we get back."

It was evening when the three culprits made their appearance, and in spite of her annoyance, Mrs. King was compelled to smile at the innocent-guilty look upon the countenance of each—and that settled the “keelhauling.”

Darrel was now “regularly quartered”—as the captain put it—at the King homestead, and as Reeves lived in New York, he was a constant visitor.

This broke the monotony of waiting, and at length the expected letter from Washington arrived.

Trembling with excitement, Darrel watched Captain Adams, as he eagerly scanned the contents.

“Boston, by the Eternal!” cried the old captain. “Aubrey Dare, birthplace and residence, Boston. Killed at the battle of Lake Champlain, and buried there at his own request!”

That was the substance of the Secretary’s reply to their request, but it was all they wanted and more than they dared expect.

It delighted Captain Adams, and the other members of the King household, and it dazed Darrel Dare.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN BOSTON—DARREL’S SEARCH ENDED.

FOR a moment, everything in the room swam round before Darrel’s eyes, and his heart gave a great throb.

At last he felt sure he had found his father, and with him a name.

Smith had lied! His name was Dare! Now to find out those who had given him to Smith—and why!

These, and a hundred other thoughts, flashed through Darrel’s brain with lightning-like rapidity as he sat staring straight ahead at—nothing.

He was recalled by a gentle pressure of his hand, and looked up to find himself alone with Emily.

“I am very glad,” she said, simply, and then, with her hand now in his, sat down beside him.

Captain Adams was a confirmed bachelor, always avoided women and wherever they resorted, but he knew what he was about when he sent a pretty girl to sympathize with a suddenly excited young man.

“Thank you—I will prove myself worthy of your sympathy, and I hope your—”

Darrel stopped and looked straight into Emily’s eyes. Whatever she read in that look caused a sudden access of color in her smooth cheeks.

“Uncle John said you were to come into the garden as soon as you feel better,” murmured Emily, with downcast eyes.

“And I have every cause to feel better now!” cried Darrel, and there was an exultant ring in his voice, that somehow caused the blood to dye, even more deeply, the cheeks of his fair companion.

“Come—let us go to the garden!” he said, in the same tone, and the happy faces of the pair, as they entered the garden, caused both Mrs. King and Captain Adams to stare.

You must remember that one was but just sixteen and the other not yet twenty.

“Well, Darrel, I suppose it’s Boston now?” said Captain Adams.

“Yes, sir—as soon as you like.”

“How about to-morrow morning? There’s a good, fast coach to-morrow, to Boston.”

“As you will, sir. I am anxious to begin as soon as possible,” replied Darrel.

And so it was arranged. Julius was sent to secure seats in the coach, luggage packed, and next morning at half-past seven o’clock Captain Adams and Darrel left home, and started by the eight-o’clock coach for Boston.

Arrived in Boston, the two began their search, and for a week neither time nor money was spared, but it was without result. There were few Dares in Boston, and those that were never heard of an Aubrey Dare.

They arrived in Boston on Sunday, and the following Sunday the two walked out, feeling rather blue over the non-success of their exertions.

When about returning to their lodgings, a lady stopped directly in front of Darrel, causing him to stop short and look up—for his eyes were bent on the ground.

“Mrs. Simpson!” he exclaimed, in surprise.

“Yes, Mr. Dare. You looked as if you were in a dream. I suppose you received my message from Mr. Simpson—he went to New York last Monday, but I suppose you could not get here before.”

“Last Monday! Message!” exclaimed Darrel. “No, I received no message. I came here last Sunday, and return to-morrow.”

Mrs. Simpson looked at Darrel curiously, and said:

“Will you accompany me home? I have, I think, something of importance to say to you.”

“Certainly, he will, madam! Certainly, he will!” exclaimed the captain, answering for Darrel.

This brought Darrel to his senses, and he introduced the captain.

“And will you not accompany us?” asked Mrs. Simpson.

“Certainly, madam!” replied the captain, and in a quiet aside, intended only, however, for Darrel’s ear:

“A devilish fine woman, my boy!”

“Mr. Dare, I have a strange tale to tell, and one which I think will interest you,” said Mrs. Simpson, on arriving home, “and as it is a long one, you gentlemen may as well make yourselves comfortable. If you smoke, please do not refrain from doing so on my account,” and ringing for a servant, she ordered some biscuits and sherry.

“Many years ago—some twenty-two, I should judge,” began Mrs. Simpson, “there were two young men in this city who, although not relatives, and one comparatively poor and the other very rich, were very great friends—like brothers.

“Both fell in love at the same time, and unfortunately with the same lady, and she chose the poorer man.

“They were married, and two years after the wife died leaving one child—a boy, who was taken care of by his paternal grandmother, while his father, who enlisted in the navy when the war began, was away serving his country.

“The father was killed, and his death broke his poor old mother’s heart—at all events, she died shortly after, but before she died she sent for her son’s former friend, and to him confided the care of her infant grandson—a trust which he gladly accepted.

“The rich man was not healthy at the time—indeed, his death would surprise no one, and when he announced his intention of adopting the child of his former friend, and did actually do so, there was great indignation among, and many protests from, his poorer relatives, who expected to share his great wealth.

“Among these relatives were two brothers, and they laid a plan which would bring all the wealth, if not to themselves personally, at all events into their family.

“I should have stated that the rich man never married, but when the child came into his care engaged a housekeeper and various attendants for him, although he very seldom saw the infant.

“The housekeeper was an English girl of good family, who, becoming infatuated with a worthless fellow, eloped with him to this country, where she found to her sorrow he would support neither her nor himself. Not only that, but he treated her brutally, and she lived in constant dread.

“These two brothers learned who the housekeeper of their rich relative was, and going to the husband offered him a goodly sum to substitute the child of one of them for the adopted child—which offer he gladly accepted, but when he laid the plan before his wife—for she was compelled to give the brute the larger part of her salary—she rejected it, and for doing so received a severe beating.

“Following this, the brute threatened to have her dismissed from her position, and finally it came to a case of life or death.”

Both Darrel and Captain Adams were now intensely interested. All this talk was surely the prelude to something greater, and they exchanged significant glances when Mrs. Simpson paused to take a sip of sherry at this point.

“When it came to a question of life or death,” resumed Mrs. Simpson, “the unfortunate woman gave in. An appeal to the authorities meant, at the very least, disgrace and dismissal from her position, and afterward, perhaps, her death, in revenge for the disappointment her brutal husband would undergo.

“Well, as I said, she consented. A child was brought to her one night about twelve o’clock and the other taken away.

“Immediately afterward, the housekeeper received word from her husband that she must come to him and take care of the stolen child, and that she would be well paid for doing so. Already full of remorse, she at once consented, and they left Boston with the child.

“In adopting the child the rich man had given it another name. His own Christian name was

Matthew, that of his friend’s wife Grace, and the child was named Matthew Grace!”

“Matthew Grace!” exclaimed Darrel, starting up, but Mrs. Simpson motioned him to be quiet, and continued:

“All this I learned from a letter written just before the death of my—my—poor sister!” and Mrs. Simpson burst into tears, but recovering herself in a little while, resumed her story.

“Yes, the housekeeper was my poor unfortunate sister. She wrote to me just before her death, to right the wrong, if possible—and I am doing it!

“Richard Varney, Mr. Dare (Darrel started again, but was waved back), told you the truth regarding his name, for he was one of the two brothers. The other was Captain Andre—Varney—and he had not time.”

“But what does all this mean, Mrs. Simpson?”

“Simply that you are Darrel Dare, son of Captain Dare, but adopted by Matthew Tudor, under the name of Matthew Grace!”

“Well! this does beat cock-fighting! But, I told you she was a devilish fine woman,” observed Captain Adams, in one of his usual asides.

Darrel simply stared; he was too much astonished to speak.

“I have seen Mr. Tudor,” continued Mrs. Simpson, after pausing a few minutes, “and he is now acquainted with all the facts. He is anxious to see you, and it was to bring you here that Mr. Simpson went to New York. This is his address, and he is now at home—or was just before I met you.”

Darrel took the paper mechanically. He was bewildered, and yet happy, for his search was now at an end.

“No; I shall go home first,” he decided. “To-morrow will be time enough to call on Mr. Tudor. I shall not attempt to thank you, Mrs. Simpson; words would be worse than useless.”

Captain Adams and Darrel took leave of Mrs. Simpson and returned to their lodgings, where they found a visitor awaiting them.

It was Donald Fraser, dressed as an officer, and his first words were:

“Captain Stewart’s back—Captain Dare!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

CAPTAIN DARREL—GRACE IN TROUBLE.

DARREL laughed as he extended his hand to Donald.

“Don’t laugh at me, captain,” demurred the latter. “I didn’t ask ‘em for the uniform—never thought o’ such a thing!”

“Indeed, Donald, I was not laughing at you,” replied Darrel earnestly. “I congratulate you most heartily on your good luck; but, isn’t it time to drop the ‘captain’? We’re not aboard the Hawk now.”

“No, sir, but we will be soon, I’m thinkin’. But, aboard or not, captain it is, an’ I’m your third luff!”

There were three things for which Donald was justly celebrated: he never got drunk, he never lied and he never joked.

In view of the last-named phase of Donald’s character, Darrel was compelled to accept the “captain” as a solemn fact, and the newly-made lieutenant clinched his statement a moment later, by pointing to a box lying beside him on a chair.

“That’s your new uniform,” he announced. “I thought ye might like t’ wear it home.”

“You said Captain Stewart had returned: what success did he have?” asked Darrel, after the new uniform had been duly inspected and admired.

“None at all, but he came near losin’ both ships to make up for it.

“Oh, yes, it’s true enough,” continued Donald, answering his captain’s incredulous stare, “and it happened this way:

“About ten miles off Carthage they picked up a chap that said he’d been a pirate, but for something he’d done they punished him by settin’ him adrift in an open boat without meat or drink, sail or oars.

“He wanted revenge—oh, he was burnin’ for it!

“Would he pilot the ships in? Of course, he would—just try him!

“Well, the’ did, an’ he did pilot ‘em into the bay—and right under the guns of a half-dozen shore batteries. Then he left them to look out for themselves, and a rough time they had of it.

“Finally they got out, but it was a hard struggle, and everythin’ was cut to pieces. Then to cap it all a storm—a regular cyclone, sprung up an’ it was neck or nothin’ for hours. When it was over, they were glad t’ get home.

"Now they're goin' back, an' you go with 'em in command of the Hawk."

"They were in pretty tough luck," said Captain Adams.

"Tough luck!" ejaculated Donald scornfully. "The idea of trustin' a bloody pirate!"

Next day Darrel called on Mr. Tudor, and received a warm welcome. After some conversation, and unstinted praise of Darrel, Mr. Tudor said:

"I have a nephew—or rather he was taught to call me uncle, though no relative—but I need say no more. You know the story as well as myself."

"I am rather at loss what course to pursue in the matter, for while you are the real adopted son, Matthew Grace has been taught to look upon himself as my heir."

Mr. Tudor paused for a moment, giving Darrel an opportunity to say:

"I came here simply to thank you for your kindness to my grandmother and myself, Mr. Tudor—not to talk of your money. That belongs to Matthew Grace. I am Darrel Dare!"

"Good! I like you all the better for your spirit," declared Mr. Tudor, extending his hand to Darrel, which the latter took with the remark that he must leave at once for New York.

On the way back to his lodgings, Darrel met many of the two crews and officers of the returned ships, and was greeted on every hand in pleasant surprise.

He started at once for New York, and soon forgot his meeting with the officers and seamen, but it had great bearing on his fortunes, for he was still quite a "lion," and had received a great deal of attention while in Boston.

He was popular with the officers, and beloved by the men, and meeting him, especially in a captain's uniform, renewed their interest, and caused them to talk of him, in drawing-rooms as well as taverns.

From Darrel, the talk naturally drifted to Grace, and Mr. Tudor soon had a pretty fair story of his adopted son's career aboard the "United States," with the addition that the court-martial had rendered a Scotch verdict—"not proven."

It was, also, broadly hinted that this verdict was owing to Captain Stewart's friendship.

Mr. Tudor was furious on hearing this, and sent for Grace, who had arrived the previous night, and had delighted his uncle—as he called him—and amazed those present who had heard the true story, with a glowing account of his achievements.

"You sent for me, sir?" questioned Grace, entering.

"Yes, sir. You came home yesterday with a story of all the brave and heroic deeds you had performed. Now, let me tell you what I have learned this morning," and Mr. Tudor repeated Grace's true history aboard the frigate.

"Now, I shall not accept this as true," continued Mr. Tudor, "until I have seen Captain Stewart. I shall send for him and Captain Dare, to-day, and if the story is confirmed, you must look out for yourself. In any case, half my estate shall go to Captain Dare, for I may as well tell you that he is my adopted son for whom you were substituted by your father. That, however, was no fault of yours."

"I am through for the present—you may go."

With a heart full of rage and dismay, Grace left the room and proceeded to his own, to brood over his exposure, for he knew that if questioned, Captain Stewart would not lie, and he believed Darrel would be only too glad to testify against him.

He also knew that it was only the lack of Darrel's testimony that enabled the court-martial to bring in the verdict "not proven."

He had run heavily in debt in the expectation of receiving a large sum on returning home, and now he would certainly be turned out without a dollar, a home or a friend.

Full of rage and bitterness, Grace started to go out when the sound of Mr. Tudor's voice reached him, and listening attentively, he heard him sending for Mr. Marshall, his lawyer.

Back to his room he went, and when the lawyer arrived, stole softly to the library door, only to hear his worst suspicions confirmed.

Mr. Tudor was making two wills, one of which divided his estate equally between Darrel Dare and Matthew Grace, while the other left everything to Darrel Dare.

Two years before, Mr. Tudor had made a will bequeathing his entire estate to Matthew Grace, of which fact the latter was well aware.

"You'll never sign another will!" was Grace's mental resolve, as he left the library door—but how could he prevent it?

Captain Stewart could not arrive within a week, that Grace happened to know, and until he did the new will would not be executed. He would be able to devise some plan before the week expired.

Grace's associates were not always of the best, and after leaving home he went to a low grogery, the resort of thieves and bad characters generally, where, from the cordial greeting accorded him, he was evidently well known and heartily welcome.

Here he entered into close conversation with an evil-browed ruffian whom he addressed as Horace, ordering drinks for both at short intervals.

When they parted, a plan—or rather two plans, for preventing the signing of a new will had been formulated.

"If the first fails—well, then the other *must* be carried out," muttered Grace, as he started homeward, and his tone was that of a man who had determined to commit a desperate deed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MESSAGE FROM BOSTON.

DARREL'S promotion had been kept secret from Mrs. King and Emily, as well as from many of their friends, and his arrival in the uniform of a captain created a sensation, which was enjoyed by no one more than by Captain Adams.

The stage-coach was behind time, reaching New York at eight o'clock, and it was nearly nine when they arrived home.

"Phew!" whistled Captain Adams, as they approached the house. "Look at all the lights! Another blasted party going on, I'll bet my wig! Whose birthday is it this time?"

When "Captain Adams! Captain Darrel! Lieutenant Fraser!" came ringing through the drawing-room, there was a general stir and turning of heads among the brilliant assemblage gathered to meet Captain Stewart and Captain King.

(Captain Adams had, unknown to the others, given Julius a shilling to emphasize the second name, and it was fully earned. Not a person in the room missed a syllable.)

Captain Stewart came forward, and with a hearty:

"I congratulate you, my boy!" took charge of Darrel, and thus relieved the latter of some of the embarrassment caused by the prominence given his name.

Captain Adams (being at home), and Reeves (who felt at home), on either side of Donald, quickly made the new lieutenant feel at ease, and made a small-sized "lion" of him.

There were many officers—naval and military—present, with their wives and daughters, as well as a number of civilians, to all of whom Darrel was introduced by Captain Stewart, and by all of whom he was paid many compliments and great attention.

But, Darrel did not care for either compliments or attention just then, for on the opposite end of the room he could see Emily and Ellen Simpson, guarded by Captain Adams, Reeves and Donald, and every time he looked in that direction a pair of bright eyes shot an inviting glance to join the circle of admirers.

Captain Stewart was a very keen observer. He soon saw "how the land lay," and saved Darrel from the resentment of those surrounding them, by saying:

"By the way, captain, you have not presented yourself to Miss King. If you have any desire to retain Captain Adams's favor, you had better do so at once."

And, delighted to get the opportunity, Darrel did—and stayed there, much to the disgust of those he left.

He was received so warmly by Emily, that when he called next evening the coolness of her reception fairly staggered him, and he departed almost immediately.

"An arrant flirt!" muttered Darrel, as he walked to where The Hawk was lying, and under pretense of having considerable writing to do, passed the night aboard the schooner.

He had spent almost the entire day with the two senior captains, who arrived shortly after his departure, and were considerably surprised to learn from one of the servants, that Darrel had remained in the house only a few minutes.

Their surprise was changed to alarm next morning, when it was found that Darrel had not returned during the night, but in the midst of their inquiries, a messenger arrived from The Hawk with a letter "that Captain Darrel had received for Captain Stewart."

"Is he then on The Hawk?" asked Captain King in surprise.

"Yes, sir; spent the night on board."

Surprise was manifested in the glances exchanged by every one, but nothing was said until the messenger had gone.

"What does this mean?" asked Captain King, looking at his friend in wondering surprise, and then at those about him at the table.

But no explanation was given;—the only one who could explain, would not, although certain signs of uncalled-for agitation did not escape the keen eyes of Captain Stewart, who said:

"Well—we'll soon know what it means. I'll see him immediately."

His gaze was fixed on Emily, and the slight blush called up by his words, confirmed the captain's suspicions.

But, as to learning anything from Darrel, Captain Stewart was wrong. He wished to stay aboard The Hawk until she was in complete readiness for sea—he would then know so much more about her;—that was all Captain Stewart could get out of Captain Darrel.

Just a little angry, and yet rather amused, Captain Stewart returned to Captain King's residence to find Mr. Tudor's messenger awaiting him, bearing an urgent request that he should come to Boston at once, and bring Captain Darrel with him.

The urgency of the message caused Captain Stewart to change his plans.

"You return at once?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I have a special post-chaise, with a change of horses all along the road."

Doubly impressed by this haste, Captain Stewart said:

"Very well. Tell your master that, God willing, I will be with him Saturday night—late, probably. Under ordinary circumstances, or for any other person, I should not think of leaving the city for another week—and you may tell him so."

Wondering at the urgency of the message he had received, and more so at the request for Darrel's presence—for the latter had no opportunity the previous night to tell his experience in Boston, and was too much occupied with the assumed "repairs" of The Hawk to do so that morning—Captain Stewart walked toward the library.

He had some important letters to write on account of his sudden departure from the city, and was pondering over them as he approached the library, when he was startled by the sound of some one sobbing—sobbing as though her heart would break.

The sound came from the library, and, pausing at the open door, Captain Stewart saw Emily lying on the sofa, with her face buried in the cushions.

Stepping softly from the door, the captain met Julius, whom he sent to The Hawk with the following message:

"Tell Captain Darrel I must see him here at once; and give him this letter," handing Julius Mr. Tudor's letter.

"Now I've got the young rascal!" chuckled the captain; and when Darrel at length arrived, he said:

"Let us go into the library. I want to talk to you about this trip."

But on reaching the library, Captain Stewart found his game spoiled. Emily was no longer there!

To cover his confusion and account for his urgent message, Captain Stewart hastened to say:

"I have promised to be in Boston Saturday night, but I am not certain that I can keep the appointment. As Mr. Tudor asks for *both* of us, perhaps, if you started at once, you might help him until I arrive. There is nothing to detain *you*. Can you start to-night?"

"I can hire a post-chaise and start at once, if you wish," replied Darrel, glad of an opportunity to make up for his obstinacy earlier in the day, and then he related his experience in Boston.

Captain Stewart was astonished at what he heard, and advised that Darrel depart without delay.

"Go by all means!" he urged; "any money you may require, I can give you. Pack up now, while I send Julius to engage a post-chaise."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MURDER IN THE AIR.

MR. TUDOR'S messenger returned home, and informed his master that Captain Stewart would be in Boston on Saturday night—probably late.

Grace, listening at the half-open door, was startled by this information, and making a mental note of the last words, hastened to consult his friend, Horace, at the "Bull's Eye" tavern.

"Well, it's only *which* is it to be," decided Horace, after hearing Grace's story, adding:

"But, if ye'll take my advice, it'll be the old chap. Ye see, he'll be suspicious if it's t'other one—still, that's *your* business."

Grace poured out a big drink of liquor and swallowed it at one gulp, but did not speak.

"Well, which is it? This is Friday. We've got no time t' dilly-dally with it!" Horace impatiently urged.

"I suppose you are right, Horace. He *would* be suspicious," replied Grace.

"Then it's the old chap! I'm glad ye see it the right way. I'm t' get what loose stuff there is, besides what we've agreed?"

"Yes, yes! For God's sake stop talking of it!" cried Grace.

"But, we *must* talk about it!" returned Horace angrily. "I must know when and how I'm goin' t' get into the house. Will twelve o'clock be about right?"

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Grace, with averted eyes.

"How will I get in?"

"I will let you in at the front door."

"Good!" ejaculated Horace with a grin. "It'll look as though I was one of the family."

"Now, then," continued the ruffian, "he sleeps on the second story—front. No one else on that floor?"

"No—not now."

"And you sleep above—so you can't hear *anythin'*."

The frightful leer accompanying these two words caused Grace to shiver, and for a moment he was inclined to withdraw from the plot which he and his companion had formed to prevent Mr. Tudor from signing another will.

It was a very simple plot—nothing but the murder of Grace's benefactor!

"Come, none o' yer airs!" exclaimed Horace angrily. "You brought the thing up, and now ye pretend t' be horrified. Pass that bottle!"

It was nine o'clock when Grace arose to go home.

"Be sharp about the time!" warned his companion, and nodding acquiescence, Grace walked on homeward.

Both the murderers in contemplation had been drinking steadily all the evening to steel their nerves, and on reaching the open air, Grace began to stagger occasionally.

"This won't do—I must keep away from him when I get home," he said to himself.

In accordance with this half-drunken wisdom, Grace let himself in very quietly and stole up to his room.

He heard voices in the library, but paid no attention to them—the die was cast—it was too late, now!

Had he listened, as was his custom of late, Grace would have heard the voice of Darrel Dare.

"I would not put much faith in these stories, Mr. Tudor. Besides a second investigation, such as you propose, will humiliate him before his captain."

And Mr. Tudor's response:

"That is true, Darrel. Perhaps I am too hard on the boy. I'll think it over, to-night."

Darrel, starting three hours after Mr. Tudor's messenger, had arrived at six o'clock, but Grace knew nothing of it, nor of the indication of a favorable change in his benefactor's views regarding him.

Now tossing restlessly on his bed, again nervously pacing the floor, a prey to emotions everything but happy, Grace awaited the hour when he was to admit the murderer of him whom he called uncle.

At length the house became quiet, and a distant clock tolled twelve.

Heavens! had the time arrived so quickly?

For a moment Grace hesitated. Thoughts of the past—of the many kindnesses, the tender care of his childhood, and the liberal, trusting,—blindly trusting treatment of later years—all this flashed through his mind, but it was too late!

Stealing noiselessly down the stairs, he opened the door and admitted the assassin.

"Stay here until I get back to my room!" ordered Grace, in a hoarse whisper.

Back to his room again he stole, to crouch on the floor, with ashen face and trembling limbs, awaiting the cry that would proclaim the death of the man to whom he owed everything he knew and everything he possessed!

How horrible the suspense was! And those infernal, torturing recollections would come back!

A cold sweat was streaming down his face; he was shaking like a man with the palsy; when, suddenly, a pistol-shot, followed by a cry

of mortal agony, broke the awful stillness of the house.

The shock was so great and unexpected, that Grace's overtaxed nerves gave way, and he collapsed in a heap on the floor, where he was found by Darrel and Mr. Tudor.

Horace, after giving Grace time to regain his room, had ascended to the second story, carrying a knife and a noose—his intention being to strangle Mr. Tudor, if it could be done quietly, and, if not, to use the knife.

The door creaked a little as he cautiously opened it, but as the man on the bed remained motionless, he stepped into the apartment, with the knife between his teeth and the noose in his hand.

The brightly shining moon flooded the room he was in with light, while the inner room was as dark as a pocket.

Horace's business, however, was all in the front room, and he did not even glance through the partly-open folding-doors, as he crossed to the bedside.

Had he done so he might have saved his life, for Darrel, lying half-awake in the next room, was rendered wholly so by the creaking of the door, and when Horace crossed the room he crept out of bed.

Grasping one of his pistols, Darrel stepped to the opening between the doors, where he saw the man, whom he had supposed was a burglar, placing a noose around Mr. Tudor's neck.

Before Darrel could speak or interfere, Mr. Tudor opened his eyes, and as he did so, Horace dropped the noose for the knife, but, before it reached the intended victim, a pistol-shot rung out and the would-be murderer fell, mortally wounded.

"'Twas your own son put me up to it!" groaned the dying man, when Mr. Tudor questioned him as to his object. "'Twas your own son! He let me in, and he's up-stairs now ready to hear you're dead. D'ye—d'ye—notice how sound—he—sleeps? He—he—never—never heard—that shot—oh, no! Ye were—going t' make—another—will— Oh! Oh, God!"

That was all, but it was sufficient, and hastily dressing themselves, Mr. Tudor and Darrel went to Grace's room, where they found him lying unconscious.

"Go up-stairs and stay with that—with Mr. Grace until he recovers. Then send me word," commanded Mr. Tudor to two of the male servants, on returning to his own room, where the dead man was still lying, adding:

"Don't hesitate to use force of *any* kind, if he attempts to leave his room."

Then Mr. Tudor sat down and drew a check for one hundred dollars, after which he wrote the following note:

"You have twenty-four hours' start of the officers of the law."

He had scarcely finished, when a servant entered to announce Grace's recovery.

"Give him those," said Mr. Tudor, pointing to the check and note, and then closed the door, that he might not see the figure that slunk by the door a few minutes afterward.

The servants were cautioned, the authorities notified, and the affair set down as burglary.

Captain Stewart, however, on arriving next day, was informed of the real facts, and then he and Darrel started for New York.

Mr. Tudor wanted to be alone—he was too much upset to entertain visitors.

"If you keep on at this rate, Darrel, we'll have to erect a statue to you," declared Captain Stewart, as they were riding homeward.

"Now," he continued, "I want your opinion of a peculiar case that has come under my notice."

"Suppose you were a pretty girl, fairly well-to-do, with a wealthy old uncle, whom you like very much for himself, and not because he says you will be his heiress."

"Suppose, also, you meet a young man—a sailor—to whom you became very much attached, and to whom this rich uncle takes a great liking, and desires to make a match between you and the young officer—I mean sailor."

"And suppose, that not knowing you were already deeply interested in this young officer—sailor, your rich old fool of an uncle were to undertake to hurry matters by telling you—even jestingly—that if you didn't marry the young man you would never inherit his money—do you think you should be blamed for immediately showing your disdain, your indifference to his money, by treating this young man (whom you really like so much) coolly?"

Darrel, who now understood what had happened between Emily and Captain Adams, did not reply, and Captain Stewart continued:

"I see you understand. Don't go too fast

now, and next time don't be so high-strung. You've been wonderfully successful thus far, and I hope you'll win this prize, but timidity will never do it."

"Thank you," said Darrel, very meekly. "When do we sail?"

"Just two weeks from to-day; but many a kingdom's been lost and won in less time."

On reaching New York they proceeded at once to Captain King's, where they found Emily and her uncle still at sword's-points, and where Darrel was received by the former with icy coldness.

But, now, Darrel was not to be chilled, and at the first opportunity he requested Emily to accompany him to the garden.

Entirely unsuspecting of the purpose in view, she consented, and they were no sooner alone than Darrel began the attack:

"You have treated me very coldly of late, Miss King. May I ask the reason?"

"I do not know that I am accountable to you for my manner or actions," was the frigid reply.

"But I do!" declared Darrel, boldly. "The value I set on your friendship, your opinion, entitles me to an explanation."

"I don't see how"—began Emily, and then she broke down, sobbing—"Uncle John—says—I won't inherit—his money, unless—unless—I marry you. I *don't* want his hateful money!"

"Neither do I!" echoed Darrel, promptly. "Confound his money!"

And that settled it!

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEATH OF MR. TUDOR—CONCLUSION.

TEN days after the attempt on Mr. Tudor's life, a message was received announcing his death. Grace had accomplished his purpose to a certain extent, for Mr. Tudor had grieved himself to death over the base ingratitude.

Mr. Tudor's decease, and the will he left, which bequeathed a handsome sum to Darrel Dare, made it necessary to let the latter into a secret, namely, that the schooner, *The Hawk*, was his own property.

Mrs. Simpson had sought Mr. Tudor immediately on reaching Boston and told him her story. When the news of Darrel's arrival with his prize reached him, Mr. Tudor purchased *The Hawk* and then turned it over to the Government, on condition that Darrel be made her captain.

Darrel was somewhat chagrined to find that it was not altogether his services that had won him from the Navy Department the command of *The Hawk*, but he was in too joyous a mood to remain long out of temper, for it was now understood that he would marry Emily King on her eighteenth birthday.

When the sailing day arrived, there were many tears shed and kisses exchanged in and about the residence of Captain King, which, as Captain Adams put it, was "only natural, for they wouldn't have a chance to do it again for some time."

And the captain was quite right, for a year elapsed before the three ships returned, each ship bringing another—a prize—with it.

This, of course, was not accomplished without considerable fighting, and not all who sailed a year before came up the bay in the three ships.

The last engagement brought Darrel home with his left arm in a sling from a cleft shoulder, which would have been a cleft skull but for the courage and promptness of Donald Fraser—now his second officer.

The amount of tender solicitude that left arm evoked was something wonderful, causing Captain Adams to remark that if he were a young man he would not neglect having a wounded left arm, if he had to have it broken regularly once a month.

Well, they were married, but that is not part of this story, for a year of the engagement still remains blank.

Grace was reported to have gone to his father's friends in Jamaica; but nothing was seen of him while there.

Reeves followed Darrel's example with pretty Ellen Simpson, and at the same time, but that, too, belongs not to this veracious narrative.

Captain Stewart left his frigate to Allen, and, with Ballard as his first officer, took command of the "*Constitution*" ("Old Ironsides,") winning such distinction that when he died at Bordentown, New Jersey, many years later, he was a rear-admiral.

He, too, did as Darrel did—married the daughter of Judge Tudor.

THE END.

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